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**Doing Lone Motherhood in Japan:
The 'Project of Self' in a Precariously Transforming
Society**

Ami Nagano

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Abstract

The thesis explores the position and situation of lone mothers in Japan via a multi-scalar analysis, involving the consideration of public policy discourses, street level state bureaucracy, and experiences of lone mothers. It offers a rich account of practices of lone motherhood and the Japanese state, changing state policies, and social and economic change in Japan. The study draws on the empirical work with lone mothers and frontline welfare workers in Japan, which is balanced with extensive theoretical reflections and critically reflexive analysis of public policy discourses. A feminist perspective informs and enriches the analysis throughout. The thesis unveils the 'minimalist state' of Japan that lingers behind the front-screen renewal efforts of the Japanese state that recently involved eye-catching calls for a 'gender-equal society' (*Danjo Kyōdō Sankaku Shakai*) and universalisation of welfare. On the cusp of precariously modernising Japan are the frontline welfare workers who both struggle to enact and refract progressive policies, and lone mothers who face scripted normality that is coined by a policy trend that emphasises "differences should make no difference" without matching structural redress. The thesis shows lone mothers are faced with both the traditional and detraditionalising pressures of 'doing the self' - as a 'good mother' and gender norm deviator, that is, the stigmatised self, as well as a self that is a reflexive endeavour. The thesis presents an innovative geographical enquiry into problems of lone mothers in Japan. A variety of geographic accounts are signposted that could be developed to reflect the various intersecting scales and topics that unfold in the thesis.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Gender identities, roles and relations are being transformed, to varying extents, across the world whilst detraditionalising forces swirl around the globe, nations, and selves. Not only are the degree and form of patriarchy changing with detraditionalisation in many modernising nations, but the self is said to be a project in a contemporary order, continuously redefined, and lifestyle increasingly a matter of personal choice. Japan is an interesting site of investigation for both the scale of social transformation that has taken place in the post-war landscape, and its resistance to change.

The thesis considers practices of lone mothers and the street level state bureaucracy, changing state policies, and social and economic change in Japan to gain insights into problems of lone mothers. It also seeks to answer a broad question of “what Japan, in particular women, can expect from the contemporary situation and future” – the central question posed in the thesis. To focus the discussion it addresses the position of motherhood as being at the nexus of concerns, both popular and political, about changing moralities, gender relations and demographic pressures. Always the subject of emotional and social investment, the figure of the ‘good mother’ has become ever more charged in times of deepening ambivalence in the role codes around “the proper thing to do”, and concerns over birth rate. As a group of women put on the cusp at the forefront of these changes and concerns, the thesis focuses on illuminating the position and situation of lone mothers in Japan.

After the mythical Japan: the Japanese relevance

Contemporary Japanese society remains a site of fascination, no longer for its mythic veil of uniqueness but the disenchantment of Japan, and moreover for the Japanese state’s responses to the dismay. With obituaries written



about the 'Japanese miracle' and Japan as Number One (Vogel, 1979), and more often written-off as an ailing industrialised nation, the questions now asked are what has gone wrong, whether it is changing 'fast enough', and more importantly towards what?

The Japanese post-war modernisation project has enjoyed measurable achievements. To say the least, as a testimonial to its success, Japan's economy grew rapidly to be the second largest in the world. Moreover, Japan still ranks 8th out of 177 countries in the recent UNDP's human development index (HDI) that measures average achievements in a country or more specifically that takes account of life expectancy, educational attainment, and purchasing power parity (UNDP, 2007/8). However, as Folbre (1994: 125) reminds us, "[e]conomic development is not a happy march of unambiguous progress, but a contradictory process that creates new problems even as it solves old ones"; Japan's 'progress' has been accompanied by a variety of disenchanting realities. The UNDP survey, indeed, unveils an alarming gender disparity in the basic human development in Japan - when the gender-related development index (GDI), which incorporates the degree of gender imbalance in the achievements, relative to HDI is considered, 97 countries (out of 156) fared better than Japan. In the gender empowerment measure (GEM) that exposes gender inequality in economic and political opportunities, Japan ranks a staggering 54th out of 93 countries. Other key markers of the disenchantment of Japan include the high suicide rate, and declining Japanese desire to reproduce, which in Japan is understood to mirror more of women's negative sentiments about the socio-economic realities of Japan than the empowered notion of reproductive choice.

There have been major reforms in gender and welfare recently. In fact, the Japanese state has come up with a law endorsed endeavour to promote a 'gender-equal society' (*Danjyo Kyōdō Sankaku Shakai*) - a progressive measure that promises to emancipate both women and men from their

gender based roles, incorporating the Platform for Actions of the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. The thesis will reveal, however, it is a highly 'glocal' effort and at the same time an initiative that is bound up with the modern and nostalgia. For one thing, the 'gender-equal society', although with its highly detraditionalised facets, is quite openly a bio-political prescription among other means to tackle the rising cost of caring born by the rapidly greying demography. The open secret of the bio-political prescription involves emancipation of selves from gendered subjectivities and roles - *enticing* the emancipated selves to see the married life and having children as *valued goals*. Given that the Japanese state has previously relied on a bio-political *programming* keyed to socialising women into the 'good wife, wise mother' (*Rōsai Kenbo*) ideal of femininity in Japan, the recent change seen in the formal discourses around the bio-political strategy is remarkable.

Rather than a dramatic shift in the emancipation of selves from gendered subjectivities and more broadly the nation-building project, however, the thesis recounts the changes arising as a new world let loose. The progressive gender and welfare codes or the injections of late modernity are unfolding in the outmoded structures, and alongside continuing, prevalent traditional behavioural codes that remain embedded in public policies. In such national context, lone motherhood is rewritten in public discourses as one variant among many lifestyles from a subject of opprobrium, and welfare consumers are normalised 'in script' – yet the detailed accounts on public policies around lone mothers and the actual policy delivery, and lone motherhood as practiced in the everyday show the structures underpinning inequalities are reworked, and gendered access to welfare is sustained.

The glocal features of the Japanese initiative and experiences offer supra-national organisations an interesting insight into how the supra-national initiatives such as the gender mainstreaming process are put into practice, resisted and reworked in a local context, and experienced in

the everyday. The thesis also presents an interesting case for other modern mixed economies (see Gornick and Meyers, 2003; O’Conner *et al.*, 1999) in its consideration of how the Japanese state is faring with the greying demography, and the rising healthcare cost. In terms of the geographical interest, the analysis here signposts a variety of geographic accounts that could be developed further to give detailed account on each of the multiple intersecting scales and topics that unfold in the thesis – whilst practices of lone motherhood and the multilayered state legislature in Japan are recounted in the current research, other analytical scopes such as everyday materiality, glocalisation, and local moral rationalities remain to be enriched. Finally but not least, the implicit realities and structures of oppression uncovered in the thesis offer glimpse into the positions and situations of other socially marginalised groups of people in Japan such as the elderly, the poor, and the sick who are also on the cusp of the precarious modernisation in Japan.

Lone motherhood in Japan

It is not so long ago that the literature around the “problems of lone mothers” as with those of any other socially marginalised groups of people, consisted mostly of ones that approach them as social structural victims and others that internalise the problems in lone mothers as *innate*. In recent years, there has been a welcoming fosterage of a strand of research that moved away from the prior dichotomised study trend or the *prima facie* analysis, and asks “what is in fact problematic about lone motherhood?” (e.g. Duncan and Edwards, 1999). The new breath of ‘re-enquiring’ research has brought in alternative scopes to study and understand realities of lone motherhood (see Song, 1996; Villa, 2008).

My research is a part of such effort to re-evaluate and re-introduce the problems of lone mothers. Given the recent gender and welfare reforms in Japan that are deepening the precarious post-war modernisation in Japan,

the consideration of lone motherhood here presents a timely study – both to reflect on the realities of the socio-structural changes occurring, and better understand the issues of lone mothers in the precariously transforming Japan. The thesis will discover lone mothers put on the cusp at the forefront of the changes, affected both by the influences of high modernity and lingering tradition – in the preceding chapters, the contradictions and points of disconnect that surround lone mothers in Japan are elicited in the discussions around the legislative codes and welfare delivery.

In terms of the key conceptual angle, the current research focuses on lone mothers' experiences of '*doing the self*' in relation to their micro and macro socio-spatial environments – this has emerged as a key perspective in the empirical study that is described in chapter 3 to nurture and develop my research. It addresses one's complexity as a *social actor* who is institutionally synthesised but also reflexive, with a personal agency – though this is not exempted from the effects of gender, age, ethnicity, and so forth. The thesis offers detailed accounts on the practices and experiences of lone motherhood via uncovering the ways lone mothers are socially subjectivised, and their varied responses. By subjectivisation, I refer to a process through which the self is socially identified and turned into a particular subject such as woman and mother, with regulatory ramifications in terms of the social roles ascribed to the self. My use of notions such as 'doing lone motherhood' and 'doing the self' in the thesis flows from this scope of lone motherhood – that is, lone mothers being socially subjectivised thus having to do the gendered self. More specifically, the thesis addresses lone mothers' issues of having to do the self as a 'good mother' underpinned by the 'good wife, wise mother' idealisation of femininity in Japan, and the gender-norm violator that is a stigmatised self – with careful attention paid to the detraditionalising forces adding to the complexity of doing the self.

Also, my use of 'doing the self' is deliberate as a way to raise consciousness

over the loaded work we are subjected to 'do the self' in a variety of social circumstances whilst highlighting the possibility that the self can be done in other ways given that the self is 'being done' rather than something absolute or fixed. I am also using the notion of 'doing the self' to *caution* the feverish calls for 'self realisation' and 'self actualisation' in the contemporary Japanese society. Though promoted under the banners of equality, diversity and freedom, these calls are delusive at best, and repressive if for instance one quite unconsciously assumes the self as the 'self done' as mother, given the androcentric definitions of motherhood the thesis will reveal. The significance of having consciousness over partialities of the self *as we know it* is an implicit yet key underlying message of the thesis.

In the present thesis, Goffman's (1963) observations about the self and environment such as the ideas of 'life as a theatre' and the strategic 'face works' or the performances of the stigmatised self are leveraged to take account of the issues of doing the self along the traditional contours of social life. To address the detraditionalising forces, it draws on Giddens' (1999) observation that self identity in the detraditionalised order is a *reflexive project* rather than static or inherited. With the loosening of an 'iron cage' of modernity in Japan, the self identity and roles attached are certainly increasingly more uncertain, contestable, and fractured. The thesis uncovers the way lone mothers are experiencing the changing forces upon the self, and how they are coping with the project of self, presenting lone mothers with new risks and opportunities.

Thinking about geography and feminism in Japan

The current research follows cultural footpaths of the geographical discipline - with the 'cultural turn' in geography, the detraditionalised geographical knowledge is no longer confined to material spatiality. Adjoined to the 'discovery' of new perspectives of our landscapes is the unveiling of the masculinist perspectives ridden with false epistemological

assumptions around rationalities and impartialities - what may be broadly called as the feminist knowledge has been making marked contributions in the critical reflection around the 'questions of knowledge' (see Hawkesworth, 1989) such as "who can be legitimate knowers?" or more specifically unearthing the difference between '*knowledge and prejudice*'. The study is a part of these efforts of highlighting the partialities involved in the dominant social knowledge, and offering the more pluralised and humanised views of selves, places and spaces (see Bondi *et al.*, 2005).

At the same time, the study is also a modest attempt to correct the 'gender gap' in geography (see Rose, 1993), which is a markedly masculinised discipline, especially in Japan. The geographical accounts, especially informed through women's experiences and voices, are spectacularly ignored topics in the Japanese realm of geographical enquiry. In relation to my research topic, there has been a growing interest in single women in urban spaces of Japan. For instance, Yui and Yano (2000) offer a study on the housing problems for lone parent families and the welfare facilities. This is an interesting study that introduces the category 'women' into the traditional lines of geographical enquiries and shows lone mothers' housing problems in Tokyo. However, such moves to represent women in Japanese geography are limited in two ways. First, such work still tends to use a physicalist definition of geography, and thus describes movement in space of particular groups of women, but say little about how the more fundamental level of how their life course are constructed and constrained. Second, even Yui and Yano ultimately define their problems via literature reviews and questionnaire surveys that targeted welfare facilities hence overlooking women's own terms and expressions over their welfare matter. Not to deny the significance of such line of enquiry in developing the social knowledge and returning to my prior point, I suggest that there is a need to supplement such top down ways of defining others' problems with a more inclusive knowledge. With such a view especially in relation to the Japanese context, I use my thesis as a vehicle to include the knowledge and voices of

lone mothers with the intertwined social processes illuminated as a part of the ongoing reconsideration over the problems of lone mothers.

Finally, I find it useful to extend the topic of the 'gender gap' in Japanese geography to reflect on a broader issue of the 'sluggish presence' of feminism in Japan. I have indeed already highlighted a somewhat intriguing state of gender equality in Japan earlier in the chapter. The relative silence of feminism in the international radar does also say something about the state of feminism in Japan. It is certainly not the absence (see Bardsley and Miller, 2005; Buckley, 1997), but more the different context in which feminism in Japan is fostered and nurtured.

For one thing, there exists the cultural difference thesis – the prominent one being that the majority of Japanese women do not feel as oppressed as the western counterparts and are relatively content with their roles as mothers and caregivers on a basis that the household labour in Japan means virtuous, which is intertwined with the culture of interdependency versus the existential ideals of individual identity and autonomy. I recognise that there are different forms and degrees of power that Japanese women may enjoy exercising in their gender based roles, which their counterparts elsewhere may not, but I am by no means buying into the cultural difference thesis to justify the state of gender inequality in Japan. The prestige and social recognition of care-giving motherly role in Japan is at a fragile state both socio-structurally and ideologically. In addition, the essentialised notion of gender based roles, the extensive female or role investment which one may engage, and the social regulation around the self to conform to these roles mean that *becoming fully conscious* of the oppressive state of affairs, and *expressing* the experiences of oppression are both not easy the thesis will reveal. There also exists a view that Japanese feminism lacks the socio-historical privilege or driving force, which their American counterparts may enjoy leveraging more. Unlike America that is found and operated, to a significant degree, with calls for freedom and liberation, the

Japanese nation has never been really about freedom or liberation apart from the times when it was externally imposed – social roles are deep-rooted and celebrated for centuries in the making of the Japanese nation (see Ueno, 1997).

These cultural viewpoints – the latter to a greater extent - are useful to understand the context within which the Japanese feminism is fostered, and indeed with which the Japanese feminists must work to effectively advance their agenda. In light of the socio-historical understanding, the forms of western feminism that attempt to *overthrow* gender roles or strive to advance equality agenda purely on the basis of justice, individual freedom or liberation might be ‘too radical’ and moreover not readily workable in Japan. Though in fact with great diversity (see Buckley, 1997), the feminism in Japan is indeed known for its efforts to accomplish broad social aims - somewhat showing involuntary openness to work with the inherited structures. In my thesis, conscious effort is made to draw implications of the thesis in relation to the national policy climate, and the key concerns of the Japanese state underpinning it. The thesis will illuminate that this is a strategic way to advance justice for lone mothers and women more broadly, given that the state’s approaches to lone mothers are ‘fitted’ to the national policies for gender and welfare that mirror politico-economic concerns and interests of the Japanese state.

Aims of the thesis

The present research looks deeply into the position and situation of lone mothers in Japan via a multi-scalar analysis, involving the consideration of legal codes, street level state bureaucracy, and experiences of lone mothers. As described above, the thesis is propelled by aims to uncover lone mothers’ knowledge and voices, and make them part of the ongoing reconsideration of the problems of lone mothers. As the thesis unfolds, another aim emerges that involves understanding how the state manages to keep its ‘welfare state’

commitments relatively small or why so few lone mothers have entitlements from the state. The thesis however works with a broadly defined central question of “what Japan, in particular women, could expect from the contemporary situation and future”, reflective of my intention to draw wider implications from the key findings of the thesis – in turn, also to politicise issues of lone mothers as a part of the broader national concerns.

In summary thus the central question posed in the thesis is:

- What can Japan, in particular women, expect from the contemporary situation and future?

The key aims of the thesis are:

- To uncover lone mothers’ knowledge and voices to contribute to the key feminist efforts of distinguishing between ‘knowledge and prejudice’, and making them a part of the ongoing reconsideration of the problems of lone mothers; and
- To understand how the state manages to keep its ‘welfare state’ commitments relatively small, or why so few lone mothers have entitlements from the state.

Structure of the thesis

The structure of the thesis supports examination of the central question, and seeks to meet the aims as outlined above.

Chapter 2 outlines the key theoretical perspectives, which inform the current research. It will introduce the scope of lone mothers’ problems fostered by the particularity of their socially ascribed subject positions, as mothers which in turn foster another subjectivity as violators of the norms of femininity. More specifically, the chapter highlights that the thesis is concerned with lone motherhood as practice, and their problems as having to negotiate the powerful role pressure around the gendered self as mothers

and the spoilt self as gender norm violators. The conceptual ideas to understand the project of the self facing lone mothers in the precariously unfolding late modernity are also sought. The key concern of the thesis as regards the state is introduced through its nation-building projects or more specifically, the bio-political engagement that has been underpinned by the gendered subjectivisation of women, though with some changes witnessed in recent years with the state's 'gender-equal society' initiative. To evaluate the role of the state in subjectivising lone mothers into gendered roles, and more recently 'loosely' emancipating them from gendered subjectivities, the chapter advocates the importance of not merely seeking to dissect public policy through state formal discourses but also how that is interpreted and enacted at the street level of the state.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology of the major fieldwork with lone mothers and frontline welfare workers in Japan that enabled the current study. It will explain the exploratory fieldwork processes that in the end involved 52 lone mothers and 43 street level welfare workers, and the handling of the findings obtained.

Chapter 4 recounts the state's subjectivisation of lone mothers in the post-war Japan with the evaluation of its legislative discourses. The state's gender and welfare discourses are the focused areas of examination here – it will reveal the shifting and unchanging aspects of the state's gender and welfare approaches, and how the state's approaches to lone mothers are 'fitted' accordingly. Leveraging the conceptual ideas discussed in chapter 2, especially the notion of the minimalist state and the gendered subjectivisation underpins it, and the just role of the state, the chapter recounts the precarious modernisation that has been taking place in the post-war Japan, and critically reflects on the recent change marked by the state's 'gender-equal society' initiative. It will highlight the looming tension of the precariously modernising state, and that born by lone mothers in Japan. It evaluates what the precarious transformation recounted in the

chapter means for the project of self that is facing lone mothers in the contemporary social order.

Chapter 5 empirically recounts the state's institutional subjectivisation of lone mothers in terms of the street level enactment of policies and lone mothers' responses or negotiations of the practices of power, to compare to the policy discourses evaluated in chapter 4. The encounter of the state and lone mothers 'in the flesh' is presented in two distinctive parts; the first part with the discourses of frontline workers, and the latter with lone mothers. The chapter highlights not only the lingering traditional welfare work, but the randomness or rather unpredictability of the service content and quality dispatched at the street level of public welfare, underpinned by policy ambivalence and overlaid onto some deep-seated problems of public welfare.

Having focused on the Japanese state's institutional aspects of subjectivisation and lone mothers' responses, chapters 6 and 7 offer empirical insights into the project of the self of Japanese lone mothers. The consideration includes analysis of their encounters with varied social agents in their everyday living, and reflections on the internal processes. Chapter 6 focuses on the discourses of one third of interviewed lone mothers who have been 'caught up' in the traditionally social prescribed feminine role of 'good wife and mother' (*Rōsai Kenbo*) and for various reasons and to differing extents ended up defending their gender identity and projects. Through lone mothers' own discourses, the chapter offers insights into how their gendered subjectivities as mothers, and the 'spoilt self' as gender norm violators problematise their lone motherhood – the chapter recounts their emotions and internal struggles as they face their selves 'stranded' in the gender role conforming self. It first reveals compelling stories of the self that resists the role conforming self but also the role tension through the experiences of three lone mothers, together with insights about the variability in the rationality mix. The latter part considers lone mothers' experiences around

issues of stigma - the engulfment in the devalued role is considered both as a matter of the internalisation of the dominant culture, and also one that is affirmed by the peer pressure. Going beyond merely 'passing' in the sense of faking the self that is strategically concealing the spoilt identity and performing 'the normal', the consideration here highlights insights into their engagements in the self-parody to reveal the self 'overwhelmed' by the role conforming self and the associated existential anxiety. The chapter also reflects on how the late modern processes are affecting the project of the self and emotions of the role resisting lone mothers.

Chapter 7 draws upon the discourses of the other two-thirds of interviewed lone mothers who have not internalised the pejorative notions of lone motherhood, and have more or less successfully escaped the various self torments recounted in chapter 6. That is, the chapter reveals further empirical insights into the project of the self of lone mothers – the ways they approach motherhood, lone motherhood, and the self offer interesting and important cues about how to successfully take on the project of self and attain life choices in the precariously transforming Japanese society. More specifically, while the chapter illuminates the optimism about the self 'let loose', it also confirms the challenge of doing the self as it becomes precariously emancipated. The active reflexive synthesis of the self, which I mean the conscious reflective endeavours of the self, is the key theme here underpinning the successful management of self though a theme of resigned self in a 'social drift' will be also addressed with a tentative suggestion of the cohort shift.

Finally, chapter 8 presents the key findings of the thesis in relation to the central question posed, and the aims of the research as defined in the present chapter. The chapter summarises various mechanisms of the 'minimalist state', and the contribution of the thesis in terms of reconsidering the problems of lone mothers whilst taking an inclusive approach that focuses on listening to lone mothers' voices. The evaluation of the central question

illuminates an agenda and opportunity to advance issues of lone mothers and more broadly women via working with the interests of the Japanese state.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Considerations:

thinking through the Japanese state and lone motherhood

The intersection of lone motherhood and the Japanese state is the major theme of this thesis. This chapter therefore brings the two prime concerns together and develops the key theoretical perspectives which inform the current research. The first part offers critical reflections upon underlying reasons for and the ways in which the thesis is concerned with the state, and the second part focuses on illuminating the key approaches for the thesis around lone motherhood. The chapter outlines the key focus of thesis as uncovering the scope of lone mothers' problems of doing lone motherhood fostered by the particularity of their socially ascribed gendered subject positions as mothers and in turn also as violators of the norms of femininity. I refer to subjectivisation here as the process through which a person is made into a particular subject. The Japanese state and its practices have risen as a key topic of interest as an exemplary of a 'fratriarchal' social fabric that exercises institutional subjectivisation of women. The chapter recounts the spectacular disciplinary power that the Japanese state through its bio-politics has historically exercised to technologise the selves of women into the feminine reproducing subjects, or the useful and 'docile bodies' to borrow Foucault's expression. The bio-politics so it is called is the "endeavour, began in eighteenth-century Europe, to rationalise the problems presented to governmental practice by the characteristic of a group of living human beings constituted as the population" (Foucault, 1997, 1998). That is, it is an integral part of the state's nation-building project. The chapter reveals how this analytical angle underpinned by the state's subjectivisation of lone mothers is especially valuable at this time given the new turn in the Japanese state's nation-building project – as will be recounted, its bio-political strategy in the name of the 'gender-equal society' (*Danjo Kyōdo Sankaku Shakai*) has been re-invented that has brought about

somewhat an epochal shift in the ways lone mothers are subjectivised though with question marks to be dealt in later chapters.

Thinking through the state

In terms of Japan, it almost appears counter intuitive to select the state as a main concern in relation to lone motherhood. For one thing, Japanese lone mothers' reliance on the state is remarkably low from the point of view of quantitative or formal statistical indicators. The role of the state as a social regulator, has also apparently been declining according to contemporary popular accounts about the rise of a complex society in Japan, with an increasing number of channels offering diversified social codes thus in turn allowing people to 'manoeuvre' around traditional roles (see Rosenberger, 1996, 2001). The role of the state also appears dismal with obituaries having been written for it due to globalisation (Albrow, 1997; Teeple, 2000; see Weiss, 1997; for critical evaluations see Held, 1995).

However, the current thesis suggests this underestimates the significance of the Japanese state in relation to the selfhood of women and consequently lone mothers in Japan. The first part of the chapter sets out to elicit its relevance by critically evaluating a historical notion of an 'exceptionalist state' mobilised to enable the limited 'welfare state' profile of the Japanese state. It will show how the maintenance of its so-called exceptionalism has been underpinned by women's subject position as the state-invented 'traditional' role of 'good wife, wise mother' (*Rōsai Kenbo*). This historic position is contrasted with the contemporary and striking reform around the state's 'gender-equal society' initiative. To assess the state's recent efforts, it develops a normative yardstick against which to judge them through a discussion of theories of justice - with a special attention to notions of justice for women. Moreover, the chapter also argues for the importance of evaluating the formal policies in terms of the street level delivery. The issue of implementation is a critical one to consider for a state that has been

‘talking fine words’ around gender equality but without wishing to pay the Swedish price, as will be highlighted.

The exceptionalist state argument

One key element that underpins popular discourses around the Japanese state is the notion of ‘Japanese exceptionalism’ (Japan Economic Development Agency, 1979; Nakagawa, 1978; see also Vogel, 1973) or in more moderate terms, the difference of its regime to others (Esping-Andersen, 1997; Goodman and Peng, 1996; Rose and Shiratori, 1986; see also Peng, 2000) exemplified in its low profile of social expenditure in relation to the size of its economy (Sugimoto, 1999; see also Goodman, 1998). Japan’s social expenditure accounts for 17.4 percent of the gross domestic product, which contrasts to almost 30 percent in Sweden (figure 2.1), a country well known for having a welfare model with a high expenditure and, being proactive in fostering the gender-equal society.¹ The social security burden, calculated as a ratio of taxation and social insurance premiums to the gross domestic product or national income, is also relatively small in Japan – 2.8 in relation to the gross domestic product for instance that compares to 52.4 of Sweden’s (figure 2.2).

Indeed, rather than the western notion of the ‘welfare state’, the Japanese state has predominantly preferred a residual public welfare model, whose distinctiveness was once promoted with the name of the ‘Japanese-style welfare society’ (*Nihongata Fukushi Shakai*) (Watanuki, 1986). This welfare model relies heavily on the principle of ‘self reliance’ but in fact conceived in terms of ‘mutual aid’ among family and community members. Since the war, the ‘welfare mix’ (Rose, 1984; Rose and Shiratori, 1986) has also involved private companies’ provisions (Osawa, 1993; Watanabe, 1990, 1997). Japan’s minimal public support with regard to the family and the vulnerable is such that the social expenditure on family only accounts for

¹ Tables and figures are found in Appendixes at the back of the thesis.

0.6 percent comparing to 2.23 of the UK's and 2.92 of Sweden's (table 2.1), and moreover, the proportion allocated to the family from total social expenditure accounts for 3.5 percent, and mere 1.3 percent for public assistance (figure 2.3).

Specifically in the context of lone mothers, the *prima facie* appearance is the same. That is, the Japanese state appears to be a trivial part of their lives, with the Japanese lone mothers having a very high employment rate of 87 percent, which is in fact higher than 70 percent of Sweden's (figure 2.4). Their take-up rates of public assistance are low of 12 percent that may be compared to 70 percent take-up rates of income support in the UK (table 2.2). The rates for various other public welfare resources are also extremely low, except for the high contact rate recorded for the employment-related services (table 2.3).

The important question is, however, one of how the state manages to keep its 'welfare state' commitments relatively small or why so few lone mothers have entitlements from the state. The thesis will later reveal a variety of factors in relation to this including the state's gendered projects, stigmatisation around lone mothers, function of the 'street level' of the Japanese state bureaucracy.

The recent state initiatives around 'gender-equal society' and social security reforms present the thesis with an additional question. As will be revealed later in the thesis (see chapter 4), the formal discourses of these state-led 'renewal' efforts appear to indicate some almost epochal shifts in the nation's gender culture and public welfare. For instance, the social security reforms have involved a call for the 'universalisation' of public welfare, and the eye-catching 'gender-equal society' makes a powerful attack on excessive gender role specifications, and outlines a state role in rectifying the social structures and relations that reinforce stereotypical gender patterns. The 'gender-equal society' ideal envisions emancipation of women from

their gendered subjectivities, and promises gender-equal opportunities to choose and practice life choice. Are we witnessing a new order where there has been an actual shift in the state's profile from the 'minimalist' towards one of the 'universal' while the society becoming gender-equal as promised or do these merely mean the changes in the mechanism of the 'minimalist state'? The thesis will use later chapters to assess the status of these reforms, and changes ensuing.

Having highlighted the timeliness of the account here with more details to be dealt with in later chapters, let us now also situate it historically to show how far from being absent in technologising the self of Japanese people, the Japanese state and its projects had far-reaching effects. The next section will illuminate the state's historic practice in disciplining women into particular feminine subjects as a key part of its what I will depict as the fraternal modernisation project.

The Japanese state's modernisation project: subjectivities and roles assigned to women

Garon (1997) in his influential book *Moulding Japanese Minds* gives detailed accounts of how the Japanese state intervenes in the everyday lives of its people in 'mediated ways' over and above the use of formal legislative sanctions (see chapter 4) and conditions behaviour beyond the residual welfare state. He shows how it has succeeded in packaging the statist goals of rapid modernisation and economic development as 'natural' and 'shared' social interests via the instrumental use of various moral suasion (*Kyōka*) campaigns promoted for the 'good of the nation' (e.g. 1906-18 Local Improvement Campaigns; 1919 Campaign to Foster National Strength; 1926 Campaign to Encourage Diligence and Thrift; 1929 Moral Suasion Mobilisation Campaign; Wartime National Spiritual Mobilisation Campaign; and New Life Campaigns) to ensure 'good behaviour' in people such as taking responsibility for one's own welfare, mutual aid among

people, frugal living for consumption restraint and savings increases, and energy conserving lifestyles. Garon suggests, moreover, the key to the state's success has been tied to forging and mobilising alliances with a range of intermediate community groups (e.g. patriotic associations; temperance associations; private charities; women's associations; religious organisations; and district commissioners), and the active 'invention of tradition' (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983) whereby the state drew upon culturally essentialist theses that invoke Confucian 'virtues' of filial piety and diligence in the Japanese people (see Nakagawa, 1978 for an example of the cultural essentialist thesis).

Women have been important agents in such national modernisation projects, both as campaigners in the moral suasion campaigns, and supporting the social welfare patterns that unfolded. Hardly the equal partner, nonetheless, women have by and large had to buy into the masculinist project to be included at all. They were mobilised predominantly as mothers and housewives via the classic Japanese idealisation about womanhood or the ideology of 'good wife, wise mother' (*Ryōsai Kenbo*) to act as the unpaid supporters of men, the family, and the state. This ideology, formally endorsed by the early modern Home Ministry and Ministry of Education, assigns women to a separate sphere from men, encouraging women to be the expert in the wifely and mothering roles. Continuing the statist interpretations of Confucian virtues from pre-war imperial Japan, the ideal of 'good wife, wise mother' coincides with a celebrated figure of selflessness and 'diligence and thrift'. Most notably, the domestic role of women has been taken to reflect 'natural' responsibilities – the thinking of which was used to justify the pervasive interest of men to shield women from 'politics' - an effect strikingly similar to Aristotle's thesis on women and politics (Barnes *et al.*, 1977) which perhaps undercuts the notion of the Asian exceptionalism. Also in contradiction to the essentialist idea of womanhood (see Rousseau, 1979; Beecher, 1970; and Gilman, 1979) or the biological determinism in explaining the particular subject position of

women, the apparently constant notion of 'good wife, wise mother' has undergone various changes, with the importance of wifehood fading while motherhood became more emphasised (Lebra, 1984; Uno, 1993). The notion of appropriate role (e.g. child bearers and rearers; unpaid social workers and community activists; savers; consumers; guardians of public morality; and reserve labour force), and by the same token the domestic and political boundaries, have also conveniently shifted according to the needs of the state (Buckley, 1993; Garon, 1997; Uno, 1991, 1993; see also Ampiah, 2000). Although the state-level usage of the 'good wife, wise mother' terminology formally disappeared in post-war Japan, it remained pervasive in public discourses until around the time of the 1986 Equal Employment Opportunity Law (Uno, 1993).

In thinking through the state, my concern is thus not the residual welfare model *per se* but rather the system that underlies it - key features of which are the gendered ways women are 'contracted in' and in turn subjectivised into gendered roles. Here, Pateman's (1989) work might be usefully reminded who in her influential work of *Sexual Contract* critically reflects on the social contract, a central concept in the classical liberal thinking (e.g. see Hobbes, 1996; Rousseau, 1979) as 'the fraternal social contract', illuminating women's inferior citizenship (e.g. see Brennan and Pateman, 1979; Eisenstein, 1981; Ostner, 1994; Pateman, 1980, 1988). By this, she means that the contract is historically made among male agents - not only is the contract situation flawed in the first place, but since the contract is 'made only between brothers' it does not result in freedom and equality for all, but it actually upholds the 'fratriarchal' civil society, for instance, by naturalising women to live by men's rules or to gain citizenship only on masculinist terms - fratriarchal because of the 'pact of brothers' rather than the exercise of power by individual patriarch. That is, systematic privileges are accorded to the 'in-group' to the contract while the 'out-groups' systematically excluded and subordinated (for a discussion of the wrongly naturalised racial terms of the contract see Mills, 1997). The masculinist and

gendered subjectivisation of women that such a system allows is a key part of my concern around the state. These issues of fraternal social contract, and the gendered subjectivisation will be revisited in terms of the recent social reforms in Japan dealt in chapter 4. The following section develops further on issues that the androcentric order presents to women, and conceptual ideas around the ideal role of the state especially in terms of bringing justice for women.

The just role of the state: thinking about a 'gender-equal' and just society

If the current social contract is flawed or gendered as outlined above then for the state to pursue gender equality via a strategy of impartiality or gender neutrality is not merely gender blind but oppressive for women.

For instance, what might be thought of as conventional thinking of distributive justice (see Rawls, 1971) that is confined to re-distribution of social benefits and burdens among groups of citizens is insufficient since it fails to deal with the structural injustice (Young 1990). The distributive remedy *per se* leaves the social relations and structures intact that have given rise to the unequal patterns of distribution in the first place. It is the implicit though pervasive presence of the material and structural basis of power that underlies gender inequalities that we must focus in thinking about an ideal role of the state - rather than gender differentiation or the pattern of inequalities in itself, the key agenda for tackling male domination lies with the structural causes of those outcomes (Young, 1990, 2001; see also 1984).

Specifically in gender terms, that is, the mere re-distributive concern of the welfare state such as a policy that just focuses on benefit levels leaves the formal structure of gender inequality intact:

[G]ender norms appear to be quite flexible but this is

mere appearance since what remains robust across time is the hierarchical opposition between masculine and feminine gender norms. ... Strategies that involve agitating for, or bargaining over, women's rights, allowances, entitlements, and so on, do not challenge the formal structure of the norms of gender (Gatens, 1998: 13).

That is, flexible gender norms do not necessarily mean justice for women. The flexibility may simply mean the capacity of the state to strategically deal with the demands of women while maintaining the masculinist social order. Indeed, Japanese women may increasingly make their ways into the labour market but with the typical Japanese notion that the woman is 'allowed to work so long as she can fulfill her domestic duties' or the 'double-burden rule', the hierarchical gender relation remains intact. In fact, in this way, she is not merely becoming over-burdened with responsibilities as in the western notion of the 'super-woman' (see Kaplan, 1992) but she is exposing herself to the possibilities of patriarchal exploitation both at home and in employment (Ueno, 1988).

In relation to this, equal treatment and equality as sameness in the masculinist social order is oppressive to women, offering a merely illusory equality given the gendered circumstances. That is the ideal of equality as reducing differences to the same will likely to mean adjusting everything to the prevailing male norms, which are typically seen as the 'general standpoint', that cannot be equated with the real justice for women (Flax, 1992; Gatens, 1998; Lewis, 1983; Ueno, 1986; see McDowell, 1997). As the prominent Japanese feminist Ueno (1988: 183) writes, accepting male standards of equality entails 'masculinization of women' hence that equality considered as sameness (e.g. see Mill, 1869; Wollstonecraft, 1988) is a 'false question'.

The key realisation from these discussions around the notion of equality and strategy to bring justice to women rests with the ideals of impartiality (see Darwall, 1983) and of the neutral state – that these maintain the hidden and deep-seated inequalities. These ideals contribute to an oft dismissed though socially significant situation where a standpoint of the privileged group falsely appears as universal or the general standpoint (Young, 1990). What this ‘universalising’ process does is ‘cultural imperialism’ (Lugones and Spelman, 1983 cited in Young, 1990: 58; see Piper, 1990) whereby:

[T]he oppressed groups’ own experience and interpretation of social life finds little expression that touches the dominant culture, while that same culture imposes on the oppressed group its experience and interpretation of social life (Young, 1990: 60).

In the context of gender, such difference in the legitimate voice experienced by the dominant and subordinated is well documented in the way the male interpretations of truth have dominated our ‘knowledge’, including that of a notion of equality and ‘the norm’ of womanhood while leaving behind the voices of women as ‘the Other’ (see Beauvoir, 1984). The uncovering of such voices and distinguishing between ‘knowledge and prejudice’ have been ones of the prime and remarkable efforts of the feminist scholars (see Grimshaw, 1986; Harding and Hintikka, 1983; Hawkesworth, 1989; Keller, 1984; Pateman and Gross, 1986; Spender, 1981) – the current thesis is a small part of such efforts. It will show that this colonisation not merely allows the definitions of the privileged through the legislative codes for instance to repress the selfhood of lone mothers but more lone mothers’ own understandings can become ‘imperialised’ by the dominant masculinist culture – an idea of the self being overwhelmed by the gender role conforming self, which the thesis will recount later.

In thinking about social justice given the long history of male domination, I

argue for the importance of politicising the inherent partiality via ‘discovering’ much the lost perspectives of social realities – uncovering of the varied women’s voices being a key part of this. A notable piece of conceptual work on partiality around the ontology of women is Gilligan’s (1982) that advanced an idea of ‘ethic of care’ normalising the connection with others and treating ‘caring about others’ as a natural virtue of women as an alternative to the individualist ontology. Though at the risk of universalising and naturalising the linkage between women and the care work, it has powerfully raised controversy over the androcentric ontological and epistemological circumstances that underpin the prevailing philosophical and political theories.

The thesis argues, however, ultimate or long-term goal should be affirmation of the play of differences and multiplicities (see Irigaray, 1985) rather than the notion of justice based on any particular model whether woman-centered (Friedman, 1990; Gilligan, 1982; Held, 1987; Hoagland, 1989) or rational disembodied contractarian (see Kohlberg, 1971) – an approach that takes diversity as its key agenda. I argue fixation on certain models or standards will always bring about unjust outcomes – for one thing, it is worthwhile highlighting that aspirations and circumstances of women are extremely varied even within the same social group. That is, I agree with Gatens (1998: 14) that “institutions need to acknowledge differences that are irreducible to one standard and its deviations”. Better said, Young (1990: 114) usefully reminds, “[t]he history and commitments of a person or group are nevertheless *partial*, precisely because they never do comprehend all relevant points of view from the outside” (Young, 1990: 114), and moreover, group differentiation in itself is not oppressive, and it can “mean not otherness exclusive opposition, but specificity, variation, heterogeneity” (Young, 1990: 171). That is, the key agenda here is to realise what the ‘heterogeneous public’ whereby the play of differences is ‘acknowledged and respected’ (Young, 1990: 119).

This latter diversity paradigm is nonetheless open for political manipulation to accept unequal opportunities. It is thus import to advance an ideal of differences as to mean the 'equal opportunities' for all to realise their valued choices. Indeed, an essence of injustice is the 'inequality of opportunities' grounded in social structures – the agenda is to tackle formal structures or hidden injustice that underlie inequalities among different groups of individuals to exercise their capacities (Young, 1990; see also Young, 1984, 2001). Such an inclusive society would support a 'politics of difference', which advances social policies to afford special treatments to groups of the oppressed in order to actualise equality as the participation and inclusion of all groups. Again, however, we must be careful here to emphasise the inclusive purpose since the notion of the 'special treatment' is open to masculinist manipulations – that is, it can fall into the classic interpretations of women's differences whereby 'biology becomes the destiny' that is the differences are used to justify the inhibition of women from full participation in society. Moreover, with the Asian states, there is that 'negative potential' to mobilise cultural difference, which the states can conveniently use to reject the ideals of equality and justice about gender differences that are politicised by the western feminism.

Having thus far identified key perspectives to evaluate the state in terms of its formal policy discourses while using the term 'the state' unproblematically, I will end the first part of the chapter by critically reflecting upon the way of dealing with 'the state' as a monolithic bloc.

Street level of the state bureaucracy: state in action versus the state in formal discourses

In parallel to the popular academic interest in the discursive analyses of policies, there exists a body of literature that advances an important view that public service actually delivered and the user's experiences of the public service cannot be simply read off from the legislative discourses

alone (Blackmore, 2001; Downs, 1967; Evason and Robinson, 1998; Moore, 1988; Prottas, 1979; Rees, 1979; Seymour, 1999). Not only does the state act in mediated ways through para- and non-state groups it is in itself a complex and sometimes contradictory bureaucracy that embodies multi-layered policy zones.

Street level bureaucracy, as Lipsky (1980) termed, is infamous for playing a crucial role in influencing the user's experiences of the state not merely in terms of its engagement in the 'face-to-face' interactions but also for the role in actually 'making' policies:

[T]he decisions of street level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures, effectively *become* the public policies they carry out. I argue that public policy is not best understood as made in legislatures or top-floor suites of high-ranking administrators, because in important ways, it is actually made in the crowded offices and daily encounters of street level workers (Lipsky, 1980: xii).

In this light, the frontline workers involved in the mass and unpredictable work of the so-called people-processing are thus gatekeepers or boundary actors, that is, defining the limits of state inclusion and intervention in practice and delivering the day-to-day decisions in the face of numerous rules and role tensions with which they routinely deal (Lipsky, 1980; Prottas, 1979).

It is also the nature of the interaction that is involved in the encounter at the street level of the state bureaucracy that makes the consideration here important. More specifically, the interaction between the state's welfare providers and consumers tends to be the encounter of social unequals

(Handler, 1996; Rees, 1979; Young, 1997). Even if they may belong to the same socio-economic class, the applicants and consumers of public welfare tend to come into the interaction in times when they are least able to manage negotiations (Clough, 1990; see Emerson, 1969) – I will recount lone mothers' experiences in relation to this in the later empirical chapter. The situation is thus where unconscious norms and lay values held by the privileged worker may not only enter but also dominate the interaction process hence the notion that welfare professionals play the role of socialising the claimant into the dominant culture (Brush, 1997; Dale and Foster, 1986; Young, 1997). That is, within those decisions of the boundary actors, they can be more like 'lay agents' in terms of drawing upon tacit and popular knowledge and judgments as much as state doctrines.

The potential for discretionary actions and lay values entering the welfare service actually delivered are especially important issues to note in the context of my research given that until the enforcement of the freedom of information law, the social system readily allowed a wide administrative discretion. In addition, many of the Japanese local welfare offices are staffed by the general local government officials who rotate around various departments and who typically learn their work 'on the job'. That is, in many cases, they are more appropriately seen as the generalist public administrators rather than the qualified specialists in social work. At the risk of over-idealising the specially qualified, there thus exists the concern over the extent to which and in what ways their lay agencies are exercised.

Moreover, there may be a time lag in updating the lay agency of the street level administrators – as the thesis will later discuss, the progressive ideological changes in the welfare and gender paradigms in formal state discourse (see chapter 4) are yet to be matched by either sufficient financial investment to implement the new views or the general attitude of the Japanese people. The public welfare users are now upgraded to be clients from the subjects to be regulated, and the state now commits itself to the

‘gender-equal society’ at ‘one level’ of its formal discourses but the question remains with regard to the extent the formal discourses of the state (which in themselves are contradictory as will be revealed in chapter 4) have been enacted in actual practices of the street level bureaucracy where structural and ideological circumstances do not necessarily match up to the disseminated ideals. Chapter 5 will show that construction of the law-disseminated changes is an ongoing practice of various agencies, and show that discursive consideration of legislation *per se* is insufficient to derive effective policy implication or practical insight to the ideal role of the state.

In thinking through the state thus, I have leveraged an idea of the minimalist Japanese state to illuminate the state’s modernisation projects underpinned by the fraternal social contract and gendered subjectivisation facing women – the ideology of ‘good wife, wise mother’ that is the key traditional gendered subjectivity of women in Japan has long helped the Japanese state both in terms of sustaining the residual welfare model and the broader modernisation efforts, the rapid economic development being the key part of this. I have also searched in some depth for a guiding principle to think about the just role of the state – here, the significance of tackling structural injustice that underlies inequalities is highlighted. In turn, the more conventional ideal of distributional ideal of justice, and more fundamentally ideals of impartiality and of the neutral state were put under a critical spotlight. In relation to the popular thinking, ideal of equality as assimilation of group differences was elicited as oppressive to women. Rather, the thesis has argued for affirming the differences as specificities to be valued, and a notion of social justice as affording the different groups of people the equal *opportunities*. Finally, it has elicited the significance of uncovering the realities around the street level of the state bureaucracy in understanding the state’s institutional subjectivisation of women in Japan – the thesis has highlighted that the formal discourses of the top level state cannot be taken at face value. Having focused on identifying the ways the thesis is

concerned with the Japanese state, the next part of the chapter offers the perspectives and conceptual ideas with which the current research deals with lone motherhood in Japan.

Thinking through lone motherhood

The present part of this conceptual chapter first examines existing perspectives on lone motherhood in academic literatures from a number of disciplines and cross-national perspectives. It highlights that various known problems of lone mothers are key to their social subjectivity as women, and more specifically as mothers that in turn entails the gendered implications upon the selfhood of lone mothers as will be recounted throughout the thesis. This realisation coincides with my key fieldwork finding that the problems of doing lone motherhood expressed by real lone mothers were underpinned by the gendered subjectivisation that they face, especially the feminine role identity as mother (see chapter 5 and 6). The chapter thus considers the various accounts that inform what motherhood entails upon the selfhood of women – more specifically, having identified it as ‘not natural’ and highly gendered subjectivity, it will consider the various logistical constraints and also the psychological strains and sense of self which motherhood imposes. The chapter also considers what the subjectivity as mother specifically means for lone mothers - that is, it examines the issues of the self that has deviated from the gendered role norm. To find conceptual ideas around their issues as the role norm deviator, the chapter considers a body of literature around issues of the ‘spoilt’ or stigmatised self. The discussion also draws on the contemporary changes in the feminine role norm that has been in the past keyed to the ideal of ‘good wife, wife mother’. It revisits the new efforts to promote a ‘gender-equal society’, and critically reflect on ‘the added’ challenges that might be unfolding around the project of self facing lone mothers in Japan. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key conceptual ideas discussed here to take on the Japanese state and lone motherhood.

Popular perspectives on the problems of lone mothers

There are two key ways lone mothers are considered both in Japan and elsewhere – one involves views that define them as social problems while the other views them as the problem in itself, as social threats. With the social problem account, women are typically seen as the victims of social structural circumstances. In turn thus, it focuses on structural issues surrounding lone mothers such as situations concerning the labour market, childcare provision, and tax systems (Bradshaw and Millar, 1991; Marsh and McKay, 1993). At the risk of wrongly depicting lone mothers as the passive victims of social structures, this strand of thinking prioritises and usefully highlights various structural welfare agendas around lone mothers.

In Japan, structural constraints are certainly significant for lone mothers - Japanese lone mothers' high employment rate, mentioned earlier, disguises the fact that average annual income from paid work (excluding earnings from other sources) for lone mother households only reaches 1.6 million yen, compared to 3.2 million of lone fathers' (table 2.4).² Working poverty is a wide-spread problem facing Japanese lone mothers (Ishida, 1994) – the 2003 national survey of them found that among the 81 percent of lone mothers who have 'issue(s)/concern(s)', the 'household budget' was the most frequent (44 percent). The incidence of poverty among lone parents is high of 22.5 percent that compares to 6.5 percent of the married household (table 2.5).

One prime reason that makes a situation where paid work *per se* can be hardly seen as their welfare solution is the gendered division of the labour market. As a major marker in this regard, the 2004 national survey (*Heisei 16-Nenban Hataraku Josei No Jitsujyō*) by the Ministry of Health, Labour

² These figures are taken from the 2003 National Survey on Lone Mother Households *etc.* Debrief Report (*Zenkoku Boshi Setai Tō Chōsa Kekka Hōkoku*), Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2005).

and Welfare finds that the disparity in the wage earned between male and female employees still remains high with women earning 68 percent of men's wages (table 2.6). While it is evident that the proportion of women in management is increasing the total figure is low of 9.9 percent (table 2.7). Even among the highly educated, the gender gap is considerable - the employment rate of the graduate women only reaches 69 percent, the figure of which in the most developed OECD countries exceeds 80 percent, and the gender disparity of that rate in Japan is high of 27 percent while it is lower than 10 percent in others. Also, nearly 40 percent of employed women are in non-regular employment.³ The highest proportion of the employed lone mothers are indeed found in the 'temporary/part-time' category (41 percent), followed by the 'full-time' (39 percent) (table 2.8). By comparison 76 percent of the working lone fathers are full-time employees. This is despite the fact that the mainstream employment in Japan is full-time. A situation where women are not supported to both care and work is marked by the way women's typical work pattern in Japan is still one of the 'M-curve' whereby they temporarily leave employment upon marriage or child-birth, and later re-enter the labour market mostly as non-regular workers; among the previously full-time and those who left work for child-birth, only 9 percent return to the full-time employment. The work participation rate of mothers with young children is low compared to other developed countries - 35.6 percent compared to 77.8 percent of Sweden's (figure 2.5). Indeed, 41 percent of households with child(ren) under 6 years of age are of the 'full time male breadwinner and female homemaker' type. To make a comparison with Western countries, this type for instance only accounts for 33 percent in the United Kingdom and, to take a country with a contrasting state philosophy and support regime to Japan, a mere 25 percent in Sweden.

The structural impediments also play a part in depressing the living

³ The definition of 'non-regular' employment here corresponds to the work that is not in agriculture or forestry industry and with the weekly working hours of less than 35 hours.

standards of *unemployed* lone mothers. As many as 86 percent of the unemployed lone mothers desire to work – while 34 percent are in search for employment and 24 percent cite health problems for not working, leaving 13 percent citing the issue of ‘not being able to find someone to care for the child’ as a reason for being unemployed, showing the inadequacy of alternative childcare provisions. Doubly worrying is that even with the social transfers and incomes from all sources, the average earned by lone mother households is 2.12 million yen, which is only 36 percent of the income earned by general households, and compares to 3.97 million of lone fathers’ (table 2.4).

That is, lone mothers in Japan are not supported enough either as mothers or workers (Duncan and Edwards, 1999; Peng, 1997). This is a ‘peculiar situation’ in a sense that lone mothers ‘become’ a social problem under the logic of the male-breadwinner model, and governments in this case typically decide how far to treat lone mothers as mothers and how far to treat them as workers (Lewis with Hobson, 1997: 7; see Lewis, 1998). In societies where labour market participation is normalised for both men and women, or fathers and mothers, such as in the Swedish two-earner model, lone mothers *per se* do not arise as a social problem. The Japanese situation is such that apart from the widowed lone mothers who can make claims via men’s insurance (see chapter 4), the state leaves the rest of the lone mothers to manage mostly on the labour market and some on the social transfer *neither* of which is successful in removing lone mothers from poverty. I suggest, the high work participation rate is thus a mere reflection of the ineffectual social transfer, and the traditional state’s preference to position public welfare as the ‘last resort’ and welfare policy emphasis for the ‘able bodies’ to work (see chapter 4) – which not only result in the emphasised ‘work solution’ for lone mothers regardless of the gendered labour market situation but also the stigma of receiving the public welfare benefits, steering many lone mothers away from claiming their citizenry rights for welfare. While the *caring* responsibilities of the non-cohabiting father (which is emphasised in the

Swedish model) remain neglected, the Japanese state recently emphasises the financial responsibilities of the child's father (see chapter 4) - but again, the state has not done enough so far to make this a sustainable or viable income source. The 2003 national survey on lone mother households found that only 34 percent have an arrangement with the absent father over the payment of the Child Rearing Fund (*Yōiku Hi*), and mere 18 percent were receiving it at the time of the survey.

In terms of the social threat account of lone mothers, they are viewed as the problem in itself, and as threats to the social fabric as a demoralised group of people (Morgan, 1995; Segalman and Marsland, 1989). The logic of demonisation involves emphasising 'personality flaws' as a prime reason for the problems that lone mothers suffer (if such suffering is acknowledged at all) while downplaying social circumstances that may have caused their issues in the first place. It thus suggests that problems are a result of personal failure and that it is their character, or lack thereof, that is responsible. This moral lack is then seen as a threat to society. To give one example, Margaret Thatcher, one oft-quoted promoter of this threatening image, spoke of the "growing problem of young single girls who *deliberately* become pregnant in order to jump the housing queue and gain welfare payments" (Macaskill, 1993: 44-5, quoted in Song, 1996: 391, emphasis mine). Here she implied the fault lay with personal choice and lack of character, alongside generous state support reducing the punitive regulation of behaviour. In a similar vein, the so-called 'underclass debate' in the west (Murray, 1990, 1994; see OECD, 1998) is a prime example of discourses positioned the vulnerable as a social threat. In this debate, the problem of social inequality is defined as being a dichotomy of 'decent society' and an 'underclass' of people, that famously includes lone mothers, where the cause of social dissolution and under-achievement is located in the character of people in the underclass (for the social structures strand of this argument see Wilson, 1987).

In addition to the internalisation of problems in lone mothers, the demonising discourses about lone mothers are marked by the gendered subjectivisation of lone mothers – the underlying or overtly presented messages position lone mothers as ‘unfit mothers’, which in fact socially translates as unfit women and even simply a failure given the norms of motherhood and its entanglement with the ideal of womanhood as will be discussed in the next sub-part. Such subjectivity contrasts with the case of lone fathers who receive less scrutiny of their moral worth as men and as fathers, especially if they offer financial support. Absent fathers indeed tend to escape social scrutiny all together in public discourses mirroring the ways the male body is typically out of the critical spotlight that of the female’s historically subjected to intense sexualisation, and social surveillance and disciplining. In the stigma literature, such a situation facing lone mothers would be referred to as a ‘double standard’, where similar males and females are differently regarded, and ‘double deviance’ (Ridlon 1988, 1999), breaking role expectations of not just for parents but also the norms of femininity – this gendered process tends to subject women more than men to severe stigmatisation. It is worthy to note that such gendered process of stigmatisation facing lone mothers parallels that imposed upon alcoholic women and women drug users (especially those who are pregnant) (see Schur, 1983; Young, 1994).

The demonisation of lone mothers underpinned by the gendered subjectivity is readily seen in Japan – news involving a lone mother especially if she is involved in wrong doings such as child neglect, typically attracts media reports that highlight the fact that ‘she is a lone mother’, which tends to depict lone motherhood as the problem, and scrutinise her ‘inappropriate’ character and behaviour as a mother. Favourite stigmatising tropes in the media include alluding to a ‘love of alcohol’, ‘having male friends’, and ‘strong-minded character’, which violate gender traits assigned to her as a mother (and woman). The social causes that may have led the mother to the tragedy, say for instance stress and ill-health caused by the seriously

disadvantaged structural circumstances of lone mothers, tend to be underplayed if recognised at all (Seki, 1988). This type of reporting is readily seen in the media coverage over other famous tragedies such as the 1987 case of a lone mother who was left to die of starvation (see Mizushima, 1994; Seki, 1988; Terakubo, 1988), and 1988 tragedy of abandoned children of a lone mother in Toshima-ku, Tokyo.

The social threat account of lone mothers is revealing of the ways lone mothers are readily made into 'scapegoats' for all kinds of social ills (Song, 1996; Young, 1994; see Dean, 1991; Lister, 1990; Mann and Roseneil, 1996; Scheider and Ingram, 1993). One notable effect of this is the consequent regulation that can further oppress and marginalise them – the policy of workfare (i.e. welfare-to-work) that typically complements the underclass debate is a prime example. There is indeed a view that workfare is an alternative mode of regulating the poor (see also Dean, 1995; Grover and Stewart, 1999; Peck, 1998; Roseneil and Mann, 1996; Schmid and Goodin, 1998; see Gass, 1988; Walters, 1997), and the effect oppressive. For instance, a 'throtter' is one notable label given to the workfare policy, that is the 'threat and an offer' (Schmid and Goodin, 1998; Steiner, 1994), giving welfare recipients no real choice and coercively making them to accept the work 'option' regardless of the terms (Smith, 2000). This pressure can exacerbate lone mothers' problems since the terms under which they can work are typically seriously constrained (Ford, 1998; see Evason and Robinson, 1998), and also given that work can mean women's working poverty (Kathryn and Lein, 1996) as earlier highlighted. Given the persistently insecure nature of employment that typically faces women, the policy emphasising paid work, accompanied by progressive cuts in the cash benefit is indeed a 'low wage strategy' (Esping-Andersen, 1996) in disguise that risks trapping lone mothers into the 'dead-end' jobs.

The thesis is less concerned with theories and discourses that in themselves seek to position lone mothers as social victims or threats than with the

gendered subjectivity, especially as mothers that underpins lone mothers' problems dealt – the entailed problems recounted above involved social structural constraints and the social conceptualisation around them as deviants or more specifically the gender norm violator. The thesis is interested in uncovering what it means to be subjectivised into the gendered role, and how (and with what implications) lone mothers must negotiate the concurrent subjectivity as the feminine role norm violator. The following sub-section thus critically reflects upon their key social identity as mother with specific reference to effects and extent of normative regulation motherhood imposes upon the selfhood of women. This is followed by implications of (negotiating) their identities as the social norm deviator or 'spoilt self'. Apart from these what might be considered as traditional and somewhat conventional issues facing lone mothers, the chapter also draws upon the contemporary pressures lurking around the project of self of women in Japan.

Rethinking motherhood

We may 'generally' think of motherhood as of happy experience for women. Yet some will critically identify it as the 'unpaid labour of love' (see Graham, 1983; Rich, 1977). This sub-part sheds a critical light upon motherhood as socially subscribed though masked with the celebrated notions of the 'mother-love' (*Bosei Ai*) and 'mother-nature' (*Bosei Honnō*) (see Chodorow and Contratto, 1992) thus which can be extremely self repressive as will be revealed.

One self repressive profile of motherhood can be readily revealed by examining the popular maternal ideology, which is double-edged heralding the importance of the continuous relationship between the mother and the child on the emotional and mental health of the child. For this in particular, the influence of the so-called maternal deprivation thesis by Bowlby (1951), a Freudian psychoanalyst and a doctor is readily observed (Rutter, 1972; see

Lewis, 1980; Klaus and Kennell, 1976; Winnicott, 1964)⁴, illuminating mothering as a practice rather than innate ability. In Japan, an idea of the mother specialising exclusively in child rearing without paid work until the child reaches the age of three, the so-called 'three-year old mythology' (*San Saiji Shinwa*), is pervasive with 90 percent of married women supporting it in a 1998 nationwide survey (IPSS, 1998). Among the traditional burdens carried by mothers, such a maternal culture not only fosters a pressure on mothers with young children to stay at home to care for them while sacrificing their career opportunities (see chapter 6) but also leads to the familiar social practice of blaming only mothers (not the fathers) if the child becomes delinquent or maladjusted (Marshall, 1991; McIntosh, 1996; Phoenix, 1996; Phoenix and Woollett, 1991; Smart, 1996). The related is also the 'one-body' ideology about the mother and child (*Boshi Ittai*), which is the core axiom of the public welfare available for lone mothers, which not only reinforces the monolithic treatment of the mother and child but as will be revealed in chapter 4 adversely affects women's citizenry rights to welfare. The issues of inferior citizenship (e.g. see Hernes, 1987; Leira, 1992; Lister, 1990; Marshall, 1965; Orloff, 1993; Pateman, 1987; Walby, 1997) are remarkable not merely in themselves *per se* but for the implication of power to resist or negotiate the role pressure as will be recounted in the later empirical chapters.

To understand motherhood as a powerful moral lever, however, it is crucial to recognise the way it is naturalised – the socially ascribed maternal ideology such as the Japanese notion of 'good wife, wise mother' is subtly maintained by the biologically oriented account of motherhood that views motherhood to parallel the 'anatomical truth' (Parsons, 1955, 1960; Beechey, 1978). It might be usefully highlighted here, however, that anatomical differences *per se* may only explain some reproductive aspects of motherhood such as child bearing and giving of birth, leaving the other large

⁴ One critical view of Bowlby's work is that it was in fact a study of the institutionalisation of motherhood, not the maternal deprivation (Dally, 1982).

part of motherhood (i.e. the 'rearing' part) unexplained (Badinter, 1981; Dally, 1982; Lewis, 1986; Moore, 1996; Oakley, 1974; Pollock, 1983; Rutter, 1972; Smart, 1996; Thurer, 1994). The oft-quoted saying by women writers that 'men cannot bear but can rear children' reminds that motherhood as we know of today is social not natural. That is, the androcentric motherhood exemplified by the Japanese notion of the 'good wife, wise mother' rests upon a plot of analytically collapsing the boundary of innate and acquired abilities (Eisenstein, 1983; Harding, 1986; Hartsock, 1983; Leira, 1992; Ruddick, 1980).

Looking further into this plot or more specifically the origin and how it is allowed and sustained, I find the thinking of one camp of the radical feminist psychoanalysis that emphasises the significance of the symbolic or social meaning of biology rather than the general reading of Freud that takes the issue of unconscious as innate or biologically instituted (see Mitchell, 1974) useful:

[T]he human body and sexual difference are always *lived in culture*, mediated by its values, its oppositions and its discourses. Freud made a similar point when he claimed that we do not simply 'live' our instincts but rather the psychical *representation* of an instinct (Gatens, 1991: 118).

That is, difference is 'lived in culture' and given the androcentric social order or that "the dominant representations of cultural life are masculine representations" (Gatens 1991: 118), the essence of gender is thus such that sexed differences are not a mark of simple differences in our society but rather of men's domination over women (Gatens, 1998, 1991; Mackinnon, 1987; see Land and Rose, 1985). The socially ascribed motherhood thus in this light means an expression of male domination, one way women's differences are interpreted and coded in the ways that benefit men. The

thesis will later show how the female desire has been set up around the notion of the 'good wife, wise mother' that has been encoded and sustained through the historical laws and legislations (see chapter 4) that were written under strong male authorities. Moreover, it will reveal the Japanese lone mothers' pains at doing the self or 'living the body' in a society where not only the traditional cultural contours of life persist but also the cultural codes are increasingly fractured.

And there is yet another tragedy of motherhood whereby one may understand how women's bodies and desires become dangerously dominated by male defined interpretations of realities or social subjectifications (see Irigaray, 1985; Kristeva, 1991). In addition to the wrongly naturalised motherhood, the boundary of motherhood and femininity is extremely blurred or more specifically, the ideal mother figure is typically set up as the culmination of a successful female gender identity (Badinter, 1981; Busfield, 1987; Long, 1996; Oakley, 1981). The enormity of moral lever of motherhood facing women is such that there exists the 'double jeopardy' if they were to deviate from the ideal mother figure - at stake is her normality not only as a mother but also woman (Badinter, 1981; Schur, 1983; Woollett, 1991). Moreover, hence femininity is naturalised, to fail this is to be a failure – Gatens (1998:7) persuasively reveals the highly regulatory profile of motherhood as the code of femininity:

Norms of gender involve strong moral and psychological components. Failure to live up to norms of masculinity (if one is a man) or norms of femininity (if one is a woman) is not simply to fail as a 'player' in any given institutional setting, it is to fail as a person – it is to *be* a failure. To deviate from norms of gender is not to commit a bad, or inappropriate, *act*, it is to be a bad, or inappropriate *person*. The strong psychological dimension of gender norms ensures their resilience since

sex-specific, socially prescribed behaviours are internalised and self-monitored.

The thesis will later reveal how the sheer weight of motherhood understood in these terms, especially that is, how the moral lever is underpinned by the naturalised notion and interchangeable femininity is effected in the practice of lone motherhood (see chapter 6).

It is not merely male domination however - motherhood is a practice that is shaped by women in their everyday mothering. Especially in the contemporary social order where the social contours around motherhood and women's role codes are becoming multiple and fractured, women's active agencies acted upon motherhood are crucial parts of understanding issues of the self as a mother. Motherhood as lived by real mothers is more appropriately considered as a continuous project, individually negotiated though the interactions taking place in a social context. Behavioural theories that highlight popular concepts of 'the proper thing to do' (Finch, 1989) and 'gendered moral rationalities' (Duncan and Edwards, 1999) usefully remind us that the identity and role responsibilities are identified *and negotiated* in the web of social relations. The idea of gendered moral rationalities, for instance, encompasses lone mothers' understandings about their social identity as mothers and the attached socially expected responsibilities towards children. The gendered moral rationalities are held to be something that "they use to interpret the world - how they contemplate, interpret and act within their environment" (Duncan and Edwards, 1999: 22), and moreover, they are understood to vary depending on the way one situates along the socio-spatial axes of group identity involving class, ethnicity, sexuality, geographical area of residence and so forth. That is, it highlights the 'rationality mistake' (Barlow *et al.*, 2000; Duncan and Edwards, 1999; see also Duncan 2003) involved in the neo-classical rational choice model of the self that over-emphasises the individualist ontology but more in terms of this thesis, the significance of the multi-layered structure involved in their

rationalisation about their role responsibilities. The effect of belonging to different social agencies on one's interpretations of the role identity and responsibilities, and the negotiations by real women will be recounted in later empirical chapters.

The next section takes a further look at the self under the social pressure to conform to norms. More specifically it uncovers useful conceptual ideas to identify and make sense of the issues facing the 'spoilt self' as we may think of lone mothers' problems as not merely having to conform to gender norms but also to negotiate being outside those norms and cope with a highly stigmatised identity.

Issues facing the 'spoilt self'

In contrast to recent government calls to acknowledge diversity in kinds of womanhood, the lone mother identity remains a stigmatising attribute in Japan – the traditional role codes of motherhood continue to be embedded in public policy discourses and everyday life (issues which will be developed in later chapters). Here I focus on introducing theoretical ideas around the challenges facing persons with 'spoilt identities' or more broadly put those who are stigmatised. One hope for the development of social understanding towards lone mothers is a possible escape from stigma. I will first define stigma then issues of how stigma operates.

While stigma can be a major concern for lone mothers, however, it is cautionary to note that not all lone mothers will 'be bothered' by issues of stigmatisation. The effects vary because although a person may be said to possess a stigma when s/he departs negatively from the "stereotype of what a given type of individual should be" (Goffman, 1963: 13) or social norms, for a given stigma to take effect on that person, the dominant's perspective must be *internalised* by the stigmatised person (Goffman, 1963). People have varying abilities to resist stigmatisation through differential

capabilities to mobilise adaptive resources, especially financial or educational (Clinard and Meier, 1992; Miller and Kaiser, 2001; Schur, 1971) which are often key factors in avoiding suffering from the full effect of stigma. These understandings of stigma are significant in terms of supporting the project of self of lone mothers, and will be empirically revisited in chapter 7.

Among the well-known problems born by the 'stigma suffering' person (which I will hereafter call the stigmatised) is the re-identification of self. More specifically, Goffman (1963: 18) predicts that a shameful feeling arises "from the individual's perception of one of his [*sic*] own attributes as being a defiling thing to possess" and can readily see the possibilities and rewards possible without that shameful attribute. That is, although the practice of self devaluation and self denial is likely to be worse in the immediate presence of the 'normals', it can also occur 'when only s/he and a mirror are about' (see Du Bois, 1969). The internalisation of the devaluation and stereotyping (see Crocker, 1999) if not partially accepting the devalued role (Schur, 1983) jeopardises the ability of the stigmatised to create a stable and successful 'self' – this I will recount empirically in chapter 6. Such situations of being 'caught up in' a deviant role are popularly termed as engulfment (Schur 1971: 69, also see 1979) or entrapment (Kanter, 1977).

Among other factors, prejudice and discrimination are also oft-mentioned as stressors for the stigmatised. What might be underestimated is however the way the 'ambiguity around' prejudice and discrimination create stress. More clearly stated, Goffman (1963: 25) observes that the stigmatised actually suffers from "the sense of not knowing what the others present are 'really' thinking about him [*sic*]". Various authors note the ambiguity that is inherent in both the causes of and actual expressions of prejudice and discrimination results in enhanced distress (Crocker *et al.*, 1998; Crocker and Major, 1989; Kaiser and Miller, 2001; Ruggiero and Taylor, 1997).

One effect of ambiguity around prejudice connects with the work of Young (1990) who suggests that people are in fact 'rarely conscious' of their prejudicial bodily reactions because of our personal ontological organisation that is influenced by the ideal that 'differences should make no difference' as in the ideal of formal equality. In short, people believing themselves not to be prejudiced do not notice the small cues they give out that can be read as signaling pejorative views. An important implication of such cues given out with a huge degree of unconsciousness is that the stigmatised person's suffering of prejudice and discrimination is hard to establish – given the powerful social pressure to self regulate ambiguities and pluralities within the self, yet the prevalence of prejudices in the society, the possible discriminator may be actually unable to recognise let alone accept their own discriminating behaviour. Moreover, our social moral frameworks are organised in such a way that it is difficult to get justice for 'unconscious' bodily reactions or 'unintended' actions (Young, 1990) regardless of the powerful impacts that they may exert on the well-being of the stigmatised. That is, not only is the stigmatised person exposed to the humiliation of both explicit and ambiguous prejudicial or discriminatory bodily reactions of others, but to add insult to injury they have to 'silently' suffer with no recourse to challenge these behaviours. The sense of shame and the possibility of engulfment, the prevalent problems of the stigmatised, reinforce the simultaneous privatisation of their experience of unfair treatment.

- Responses: concealed identity, masquerading –

There is a coping strategy that may be employed by the stigmatised to counter the full effects of internalised stigma – one that involves the 'face work'. This is the performance of normalcy, adopting a role norm. The usefulness of Goffman's thesis prominent in the strategic face work or management of *onstage impressions* becomes specifically apparent here

given that one prevalent element of the socio-cultural life in Japan is such that it places heavy emphasis on the formal or onstage conformity to social order and harmony in social relations (Lebra, 1984; Iwao, 1993; Rosenberger, 2001). The prominent presence of social phenomena such as 'Kamen Fufu' and 'Kateinai Bekkyo' exemplify the prevalence of face work in Japan. The former involving couples performing the respected image of the married despite the *de facto* breakdown in their relationship and the latter couples in 'intra-household separation' a situation where they continue maintaining the most of living arrangements of the time prior to *de facto* marital breakdown. Both typically share a strong element of 'saving the face' to the public world though chapter 6 will reveal issues that mean these situations signify endeavours that are beyond merely 'saving the face'.

Goffman (1963: 58) suggests "the management of undisclosed discrediting information about self" becomes the issue at stake for persons whose blemishes are 'discreditable' as opposed to 'discredited' as in the case with visible physical blemishes. The predicted result is that persons with 'discreditable' stigmas, in an attempt to 'save face', participate in 'passing' whereby they perform a self freed of the stigmatising attribute. In the context of the research, as chapter 6 will reveal, 'passing' for the Japanese lone mothers was typically signified by the act of maintaining the *status quo* that was to stay in the long-term separation while resisting the gender role conforming self. One of the important rewards of this 'fashioning' of self is that the passer's already shaken sense of self may be shielded from further self devaluations – it may be usefully recalled here that Goffman's social theory of self assumes a sense of self to be largely a product of publicly validated performances (see Branaman, 1997). Apart from the issue of a viable sense of self, Goffman notes other reasons underpinning the performing self such as being spared the potential risk of being treated differently by persons who make up the passer's social network as s/he anticipates that the post-stigma acquaintances, "being attached to a conception of what he once was, may be unable to treat him either with

formal tact or with familiar acceptance” (Goffman 1963: 49). The deceptive act or masquerade of passing is thus practiced due to some combination of the stigmatic trait being too damaging to divulge to others and/or the rewards in being considered as one of the ‘normals’. Given multiple stigmas or double deviation and hence the severity of stigma attached to lone motherhood, it can be said that incentive to ‘pass’ for lone mothers is abundant.

Fashioning a self of this sort, however, turns out to be a double-edged sword. For one thing, the deceptive act imposes immense psychological strains upon the passer. Goffman (1963: 109) observes that the passer will “feel torn between two attachments” and suffer from the feeling of alienation that arises from not being able to fully identify with either of his/her old and new group. Moreover, it is observed, s/he is likely to suffer from “a very high level of anxiety, in living a life that can be collapsed at any moment” (Goffman, 1963: 109) with a more or less permanent risk of discovery. The passer is predicted to suffer from constant psychological pressure because “[w]hat are unthinking routines for normals can become management problems for the discreditable” (Goffman, 1963: 110), which means that the passer “must be alive to the social situation as a scanner of possibilities, and is therefore likely to be alienated from the simpler world in which those around him apparently dwell” (Goffman, 1963: 110). That is, they are constantly forced to anticipate scenarios that might result in their stigmatised traits being revealed, and ramifications of such events.

Moreover, the secrecy creates the problem of ‘being left’ without appropriate social supports and treatments for their sufferings. This barrier to getting treatment or support is widely reported for people with alcohol, drug problems, and mental illness (Copeland, 1997; see Link *et al.*, 1997). Such barriers contribute to the longevity of their problematic situations and even further complications (see chapter 6). Furthermore, apart from the issue of suffering at the personal level, the social withdrawal and secrecy of

the stigmatised also mean that at the social level, there exists a substantial under-representation of their issues no matter how serious or widespread. A resulting invisibility of or the depoliticisation of lone mothers' problems is, I will suggest, a substantial issue in Japan (Sugimoto, 1999; see Nakata *et al.*, 1997), which is shared by other socially stigmatised groups such as those with mental illness (see Jolivet, 1997).

One consolation is that the strategic performance of the self can be a part of the socialisation process that can end at a stage 'above passing' at which the individual no longer feels the need to pursue social performances and comes to respect his/her specificity as summed up in the notion of the 'moral career' (Goffman, 1963: 125) whereby the self seen as fluid and 'passing' is one part of the 'career' of the self progressing past its stigmatised self. While chapter 6 reveals the 'stickiness' of the subjectivity (see Goode, 1984) as the gender norm deviator, chapter 7 recounts how one may indeed overcome the stigmatised self.

Finally, there is yet another reality that should be cautioned here in considering the topic of impersonating or 'faking the self'. Thus far, we have given focused attention to deceptive passing which risks in effect depicting the self in a dichotomy of the fake versus the actual. However we might rather look at the self that is performing the normalcy to be an endemic state as in Doniger's (2004) thesis titled *The Woman Who Pretended to Be Who She Was: Myths of Self-Imitation* - in which she elicits a notion of masquerading or self impersonation in a broader context and highlights its multiple facets; not merely to conceal a shameful self. She uncovers a more fluid notion of the mask as the self, as she breaks away from the dualistic thinking of the mask versus the authentic core self, and instead illuminates the self as 'grand narrative puzzles'. That is, Doniger's self imitation suggests masquerading self can be as authentic as s/he can be - the masquerading self might be thought of as the self striven to be the self though always partial, always failing efforts. While the self impersonation

thus can be regarded somewhat positively as a part of the process through which the self learns about the self and develops, the later empirical chapter also shows that it can become a masquerade that traps the self – more specifically, chapter 6 will reveal how the mask of the good mother can come to dominate the self to an extent that one is unable to ‘take off’ the mask. That is, as will be recounted, opportunities to self re-identify if not aptly supported can cause a dire existential anxiety for some role conforming women.

Having dealt with the varied conceptual ideas to recount the project of self that is facing lone mothers as mothers and the feminine role deviators, the next will evaluate the issues of doing the self in Japan where late modernity is precariously unfolding.

Historical shift...?

At the beginning of the chapter, I have alluded to the possibility of the late modernity unfolding in Japan, especially marked by the arrival of the state’s ‘gender-equal society’ initiative. The present sub-section briefly reflects on Japan’s contemporary social order mainly with the attitudinal survey findings, and identifies additional angles to think about the project of self that is facing women in the prevailing social climate.

Traditional family norms and gender culture are certainly not disappearing in the lives of Japanese people. For instance, a survey with married women nationwide reveals even if the child is under 1 year old, approximately 10 percent of fathers ‘never participate’ in child rearing (IPSS, 1998). In all age groups except the under 30s group, more than 80 percent of wives take care of over 80 percent of the child rearing workload (IPSS, 1998). Moreover, even if the wife works full-time, almost 30 percent of husbands do not participate in domestic work while as many as 30 percent of wives in full-time work spend over 4 hours on domestic work even during weekdays

(IPSS, 1998). Further, women on average spend 3 hours and 45 minutes daily on the domestic related work while men a *mere 33 minutes* (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2001). The figure only saw a 6-minute increase for men and a minute decrease for women from the previous survey of 1996 – a daunting reality for the society that is to become the ‘gender-equal society’. The profile is also internationally somewhat embarrassing – in the case of UK, women and men daily spend 3 hours and 35 minutes and 2 hours and 6 minutes on domestic tasks respectively (National Centre for Social Research, 2002). As earlier noted, the issue of lay agencies exercised at the street level bureaucracy of the state is indeed a matter of special interest given such gap in the state’s gender ideal in its formal discourses and social realities. Further, as many as 70 percent of people still agree with a social convention, ‘if a man and woman were to cohabit, they should get married’ (IPSS, 2002). The same survey also finds that over 50 percent support the idea that ‘once married, one should not divorce just because of the incompatibility of personalities’. A different survey also finds that 55 percent supports a statement, ‘the option for divorce should be avoided to the utmost’ (Cabinet Office, 2002). Moreover, as much as 51 percent disagree with an idea, ‘it is alright to have a child out of wedlock if the person in concern is content with the decision to do so’, signifying the persistent social resistance to unwedded motherhood (Cabinet Office, 2002).

Furthermore, the recent debate both in the parliament and media over the amendments to the Imperial Household Law (*Tennō Tenpan*) to allow the change to accept the empress also exemplifies the way androcentric ‘traditions’ are still very much alive, and depicts both the 1999 Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society (*Danjo Kyōdō Sankaku Shakai Kihon Hō*) and the gender equality principle of the Constitution as the ‘dead letter’. In the first place, an idea of maintaining the continuation of the imperial household has dominated the debate, not the consistency with the gender-equal ethic already enforced by various legislations. In both the parliament and media,

the ideas such as preserving 'the tradition' and paying respect to the 'national sentiments' flourished while the debate predominantly lacked the critical thoughts such as the tradition as 'invented' by the dominant and the question of whose sentiments may become foremost represented in the public arena in the name of the national sentiments, dealt earlier in the chapter.

The recent quantitative national surveys show the extent the government has gone ahead of the prevailing gender culture, and the lack of social consensus (see Osawa, 2000; Roberts, 2002) around the state-led ideal of 'gender-equal society'. More appropriately perhaps, there indeed exists public ignorance over the top-down ideological changes for one thing as they retreat from the traditional ideology based politics while entertained by the lifestyle politics where the concept of lifestyle extends beyond the pursuit of leisure and consumption, and the politics tending to suffer from the 'low level' of political debate as is increasingly the trend elsewhere (Craig, 2007; Giddens, 1999). The general public remains to be relatively apolitical about issues of gender.

That said, there is certainly the room for change in the contemporary Japanese society. The recent attitudinal surveys exemplify the complex ideological climate of Japan. The 1998 survey with married women nationwide, for instance, finds nearly 50 percent of the under 30 age group agreeing to a statement, 'once married, husband should work outside and wife should specialise in being the housewife' (IPSS, 1998). In all age groups, it finds, over 45 percent are still in agreement with the gender-based roles. Moreover, it finds that as high as 66 percent of married women in the full-time work reject the fixed gender-based roles while 63 percent of the full-time housewives agree with the conventional role separation, showing polarisation in women's attitudes on the gender role separation. The more recent 2002 survey reinforces the mixed picture – while it finds a stronger rejection rate of nearly 70 percent with respect to the conventional gender

based roles, it also reveals as high as 77 percent agree with a statement, 'it is ideal for the mother to stay at home without paid work at least while the child is small' (IPSS, 2002). Similarly, the government survey of 2002 reveals that the child's mother scores the highest of 96 percent as 'an ideal person to carry out child rearing' while the child's father scores 68 (Cabinet Office, 2002). It also finds that 61 percent of women agree with a statement, 'woman should attain her own income even after the marriage' while only 38 percent of men agree to it, signifying the gap in the social attitude between men and women concerning the gender-equal participation in employment. The recent 2004 survey nevertheless finds a fairly positive response with respect to the desirability of reshaping the conventional gender role separation via women's social advancement - 75 percent of respondents agree that married couples would have better family lives via the change in the fixed notion about the 'man for working and women for the family' (Cabinet Office, 2004). Thus while there is great pressure to continue conforming to social norms, this model is also fraying at the edges. That is, the looming social theme is thus uncertainties about 'the proper thing to do' as the role codes become increasingly multiple and fractured (see chapter 4), and social attitudes polarise – and having to manage these in the prevailing social structures that only laggardly change.

Though it is the precariousness that is emphasised in Japan rather than the openness, the situation or more the needs for constant self reflection is reminiscent of what Giddens (1991) depicts around the high modernity – that is, the detraditionalised order of modernity. In the openness of social life today where the self is now less constrained by traditional life narratives, he suggests, the self is more subjected to *managing its life narratives* amongst a diversity of options. With globalisation and the rapid technological advances whereby one is increasingly exposed to diverse ways of living, he argues, life increasingly becomes 'lifestyle' and a matter of personal choice and with it the self becomes a reflexive project (Giddens, 1991: 32). That is, subjectivity is conceptualised as a matter of continuous

self reflections or in his words, 'reflexive redefinitions', and temporary attachments. Although Giddens does not deny a differentiated access to 'self actualisation' for individuals with respective class, gender or ethnicity differences, the lifestyle account is implied in an optimistic vision of lone parenting and divorce as fateful moments, "an event in life that sets out individuals concerned to actively engage in the self-reflexive project of finding the 'new sense of self'" (Giddens, 1991: 33; see also Wallerstein and Blakeslee, 1989). The lifestyle perspective (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1991; see Bock, 2000; Madje and Neususs, 1994) takes account of lone motherhood as one part of the diversifying family forms and gender relations (Lash, 1994).

While observing the ongoing relevance of traditional values in the lives of Japanese women, Rosenberger (1996, 2001) notes on what may be seen as the detraditionalised processes lurking in the selfhood of young Japanese women. For instance, she reports on their self ideal of living "according to 'self's own way' (*Jibun Nari Ni*) in arenas of leisure, friendships, and, one hoped, a marriage relationship" (Rosenberger, 2001: 195). Later empirical chapters will reveal, however, let alone realising but identifying the 'self's own way' can be a challenge for women whose selfhood has been sheltered from the self reflexive endeavours.

I suggest self is usefully regarded as a project that is having to manage its life narratives through constant reflections or self reflexive endeavour – especially given the socially unsupported project by and large so far, which women are increasingly having to engage, this notion of the self as a matter of choice or personal project to highlight the responsibility and importance of taking the ownership (see chapter 7) is appealing. Chapter 6 will in fact reveal the danger of living the self too tightly around the prior state's gendered project, and importance of actively taking up this personal project early in one's life-course (see chapter 7). To successfully pursue a lifestyle, chapter 7 will show the significance of capacities to carefully reflect upon

and manage the demands of tradition and late modern opportunities lurking, while taking an active stance in managing the self and life narratives.

Chapter summary

The present chapter has elicited the key conceptual ideas with which the thesis endeavours to take on lone motherhood and the Japanese state, the key interests of the current research. I have identified here that the thesis will examine the issues of doing lone motherhood in Japan via focusing upon the gendered subjectivity, which lone mothers face. The key concern of the thesis as regards the state is the role it plays in subjectivising women into the gendered role, which is in Japan traditionally keyed upon the femininity ideal of the 'good wife, wise mother'.

Through critical reflection on the notion of 'minimalist state', the chapter has highlighted the historical ways women have been included in the state's projects. The androcentric relationship between the state and women means women are subjected to highly gendered subjectivisation, and 'contracted in' as 'good' mothers and wives reminiscent of the notion of 'docile useful bodies' so the chapter has elicited. It has also highlighted that timeliness of this focus of the state's institutional subjectivisation of women given the recent state's 'gender-equal society' initiative that promises a new 'gender-equal' social order as will be recounted in chapter 4. To evaluate the state's new initiative, the chapter has evaluated the just role of the state, especially in terms of tackling the gender inequality and bringing justice to women. The key themes that I have come to depict involved the society where different groups of people are afforded with equal opportunities, and differences are recognised as specificities to be valued rather than inferior otherness. Within this, the key state's role is to tackle the covert structural injustice rather than merely the re-distributional notion of justice. A policy evaluation in terms of the formal discourses of the state is, however, insufficient to understand the actual social impact, the chapter has argued. It

has advocated the importance of not merely seeking to dissect policy through the state's formal discourses but also how that is delivered and interpreted at the street level of the state. The new strategies and actual impacts of the contemporary 'minimalist state' will be examined in chapter 4 and 5.

The latter part of the chapter has elicited that it is not the sense of victimisation with which the thesis deals with lone motherhood. The prime angle with which the thesis studies lone motherhood involves the examination of their challenges of having to do the self as a mother and consequently also as a 'spoilt self' who is being outside the norm of femininity that is as the gender norm deviator - or more specifically, having to deal with and negotiate their gendered subjectivities, and roles. That is, the thesis is concerned with lone motherhood as practice rather than as a given category or identity. The chapter uncovered the immense 'moral lever' of motherhood and issues of stigma as useful perspectives to make sense of the issues of doing the self with such gendered subjectivisations. Finally, it has also sought for useful ideas to deal with the sophisticated situation that may be arising for lone mothers in Japan where they are having to manage the traditional gendered subjectivities, and the later modern pressures to deal with the multiple and fractured role codes. To deal with the precariousness, I have uncovered Giddens' idea of the self as a project that is a continuous reflexive endeavour whereby the self is having to manage its life narratives through constant reflections. The next chapter explains exactly how the thesis has taken on the task of examining how the policy is enacted, and lone motherhood as practiced by lone mothers in Japan.

Chapter 3

Methodological Reflections

The current chapter reflects upon the methodological choices, fieldwork processes, and handling of the fieldwork knowledge that characterised my research. The empirical data for the current research was drawn from the in-depth qualitative interviews, which I undertook during the period between September 2000 and February 2001. The fieldwork was conducted in Tokyo and the neighbouring prefectural regions of Kanagawa, Chiba and Saitama, and involved 52 lone mothers and 43 welfare workers.⁵ The major aim of the fieldwork was to investigate relevant research themes to study, from the perspective of lone mothers, under the broad research agenda of exploring the ‘problems of lone mothers’. The subordinate aim was to understand the street level realities of public welfare as accounted for by the frontline welfare workers and lone mothers as deliverers and consumers of public welfare services respectively, to evaluate the conceptually conceived role of the state in approaching lone mothers.

Key methodological choice: intensive qualitative methods

Though convenient in covering a large proportion of the target population and for developing generalised perspectives of the research subjects, quantitative and extensive research approach severely limits *interpretative options by the research subjects* “whose subjectivity is quite deliberately eliminated by the research strategy” (Cricher *et al.*, 1999: 72), and is thus problematic in a project committed to listening to, understanding and learning from socially silenced voices. Mapping out social issues through extensive research and based on the ‘statistically significant’ views and experiences of risk de-emphasising socially marginalised voices, and the predetermination of questions and priorities can result in oppressive

⁵ For socio-geographical profiles of these regions see Appendix G. For profiles of lone mother and welfare workers participants see Appendix D.

outcomes by replicating the assumptions of dominant groups about what are important issues.

The mechanically gathered quantitative data on lone mothers (and others) nevertheless outweighs the non-positivistic qualitative data in publicly available sources, and acts as an important social ‘knowledge’ or ‘truth’, upon which various social policies and regulations are developed and legitimated. The social knowledge in general, and about women, remains androcentric due to the way male scholars and masculine ways of knowing have dominated the research community (e.g. Murata, 2005; Rose, 1993). The hegemony of the quantitative approach to research has reinforced the subordination of women’s socio-cultural interpretations of life and the tendency to eliminate women’s subjectivities in the dominant knowledge. That is, not only has the gendered production of scholarly knowledge tended to exclude or marginalise women’s issues and experiences, and their political implications, it also yielded male interpretations of womanhood to the detriment of women’s experiential realities. It is then no wonder that feminist epistemic critiques highlight the socio-politico significance of the absence of women’s ‘voices’ in dominant knowledges (see Hawkesworth, 1989).

The current research responds to such politics of representation, and leverages intensive methods that afford the thesis to tap “the *intricate details* of phenomena that are difficult to convey with quantitative methods” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 19, emphasis added). At the cost of foregoing the opportunity to obtain generalised perspectives, the current work has set out to use the intensive qualitative research to offer a window into the daily experiential lifeworld of the researched – so it can present the intricate details and meanings of specific themes as experienced and the ‘views actually expressed’ by those who are actually doing lone motherhood.

In such light, my research stance thus identifies, broadly, with the feminist

project and is an attempt to further unveil the partialities involved in the dominant social knowledge or policy ‘truths’ around women, and lone mothers in particular, that have been prevalently constructed in gendered ways. By ‘listening’ to and publicising the voices of lone mothers, I aimed to recover women’s experiences and interpretations of social realities.

The current research is inspired by the grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) for its interpretative framework that fits well with the scope of the current research that endeavours to develop analytic issues inductively from the researched. Its research principle is thus exploratory in nature and endorses a stance that “[o]ne does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 23). Indeed, my choice to draw upon this particular qualitative research method was based foremost on its major merit of enabling the research to explore the broad research agenda of a study from the point of view of the researched (see Bryman, 1988). The grounded theory approach in its purest form allows the researcher to develop general theories though in my research it was leveraged to uncover socially hidden issues. What the empirical data of the present research does also offer is an invaluable knowledge base from which the generalisable perspectives and new theories can be developed with the future additional research.

Sampling

The grounded theory method, which the present study has drawn upon for developing the research, involves both ‘open’ sampling and ‘targeted’ sampling processes for exploring the relevant research themes and refining the emerging themes respectively. The open sampling focuses on the ‘openness’ rather than ‘specificity’ within the broadly defined theoretical focus of the research. The targeted sampling method serves the ‘specifying’ role by which the emerging themes and patterns from the coding outcomes

of the initial open sampling process are refined. In an ideal situation, the open sampling would be pursued on a large scale to ensure the exhaustiveness of the issues that can be tapped, the generality of the findings refined by ensuring the representativeness of the sampled population and the emerging themes verified via the rigorous use of the targeted sampling methods. In the context of the research, especially the latter part of the targeted sampling process was carried out within the time-budget frame of the fieldwork.

Geographical variations

The variations in the socio-cultural and socio-politico environments among different countries but also within countries necessarily influence the people's interpretations of the experienced realities: the divorce rate, standard of living, familial and gender attitudes, concentration of particular industries, the socio-politico background of the mayor, composition of the elderly population (which for instance, in turn influences the budget allocation) and so on. The lone mothers' organisation Singuru Mazazu Foramu (2000) conducted a survey, and indeed revealed variations in the provision of public welfare services available for lone mother households across the different administrative areas within Tokyo.

The sampled lone mother population included lone mothers who had lived in the regions other than from the four regions involved in the fieldwork and respondents thus drew upon their experiences of doing lone motherhood in other geographical locations - though clearly in my formulation of the empirical data, I have traded depth of understanding for breadth of coverage. The current research focused on understanding how public welfare provision can vary and implications of the variability which were found to be only partly geographical but also more in terms of how specific practices of providers create an almost *random* experience of the content and quality of public welfare services (as dealt in chapter 5). In light of this, rather than

attempting to survey the extent of the variation the thesis focuses upon providing intricate insights into the experiences and interpretations of lone mothers rather than seeking to ensure their generality or representativeness of different localities. The possible reflection of the varied experiences upon the various micro-geographical scales is left to the future research.

The particular geographical coverage (i.e. some parts of Tokyo and neighbouring areas) initially stemmed from my personal familiarity with Tokyo and Kanagawa areas where I actually began my fieldwork. Thereafter, especially in the case for lone mothers, it reflected more of the referral process that in turn mirrored both the *lifespace* of the researched lone mothers and considerations over their and my mobility. For gathering welfare workers, I had then chosen to call up various offices in the neighbouring prefectures, some of to which turned out to be quite a challenge to travel though initially perceived to be ‘within the easy distance of traveling’ in my personalised mental map.

Sampling: welfare workers

In total, I interviewed 28 welfare workers in 14 different local welfare offices (*Fukushi Jimusho*) and 15 onsite facility workers in 12 different Mother-Child Livelihood Assistance Facilities (*Boshi Seikatsu Shien Shisetsu*). These research participants were gathered initially via an ‘open sampling’ process, which ‘openly’ explores the research phenomenon, then by a ‘purposeful sampling’ method to access the ‘relevant’ welfare workers (see Appendix F) accordingly with the themes emerged out of the prior open sampling process. The future research may involve more targeted sampling to refine the explanations of the research findings.

More specifically, in the first couple of meetings with public servants of various positions (which were realised by the snowballing sampling method) together with additional readings, I had come to learn that the

‘relevant’ workers for the research would involve: 1) the Mother-Child Self-Reliance Assistant (*Boshi Jiristu Shien In*); 2) Woman Advisor (*Fujin Sodan In*); 3) welfare workers in the local welfare office involved in the administration of the Child Rearing Allowance (*Jidō Fuyō Teate*); 4) welfare workers in the local welfare office involved in the administration of the Livelihood Assistance (*Seikatsu Hogo*); and 5) onsite welfare workers working at the Mother-Child Livelihood Assistance Facility (*Boshi Seikatsu Shien Shisetsu*). These were the work positions, which I myself and the interviewed workers themselves identified as ‘relevant’ for my particular research because of their involvement either in directly delivering or significantly influencing the offer of the *crucial means* of public welfare resources for lone mothers.

For instance, the Mother-Child Self-Reliance Assistants (previously known as the Mother-Child Advisor (*Boshi Sodan In*)) even though most of them are formally given the irregular employee status, are the classic type of the ‘gate-keepers’, especially in terms of the information, for the public welfare available for lone mothers. They are the typical first contact points via which lone mother welfare recipients make entry into the welfare bureaucracy. The Woman Advisors in practice play the similar role though they operate under a distinctively different legislation of the 1956 Anti-Prostitution Law (*Baishun Hogo Ho*). The welfare workers involved in the administration of the Child Rearing Allowance are perhaps more obviously ‘relevant’ since they deliver the major means of cash benefit available for the non-bereaved lone mother households. My decision to include the workers involved in the administration of the Livelihood Assistance, on the other hand, is based upon the fact that the Livelihood Assistance is a crucial ‘last means of social safety net’ for lone mothers. Though its major recipient is the elderly people, it is nevertheless an important public welfare means for the survival of some layers of lone mothers who face the high risk of social isolation, especially due to the way they themselves can become socially withdrawn due to the social stigma

attached to lone motherhood and the way marital breakdowns tend to be met with hostilities even among one's own parents and blood relatives. Finally, the onsite workers involved in the running of the Mother-Child livelihood Assistance Facility, though working under the Child Welfare Law (*Jido Fukushi Ho*), are identified to be 'relevant' since the facility practically plays the major means of housing assistance for lone mothers.⁶

In terms of gathering the interviewees, the initial contact points were uncovered via personal referrals and also 'cold calls' (and faxes). Notably, some departments turned down the offer of participating in the in-depth interviewing session but suggested that they would be willing to accept a questionnaire survey in writing by post. I had sensed that some were more sensitive and cautious about participating in an unpredictable interview during which they would have less control in 'checking' their discourses. I had resolved to turn down such offers since it was the worker's experiences with and interpretations of the street level public welfare or what might be called the 'insider knowledge', which I was specifically aiming to uncover in my fieldwork rather than the so-called 'formal' policies or procedures (my study on the formal discourses of the state is found in chapter 4) and a survey was likely to produce the recitation of what people felt were the 'correct' answers. Generally, once I was able to make an appointment with one civil servant in one location, the 'snowballing' other relevant workers in the same local welfare office or facility went smoothly, most likely because of the personal referrals. Specifically in terms of the gathering of the facility worker interviewees of the state-contracted but the non-state managed facilities, I relied on the intra-organisational referrals.⁷

Sampling: lone mothers

The sample makes no claim to extensive validity (in the sense of realist

⁶ More details concerning these positions and the related laws are found in Appendix B, F and chapter 4.

⁷ For the major characteristics of the sampled welfare worker population see Appendix D.

methods) but rather aspires to an intensive engagement with lived experience. Nevertheless, collection of the voices of 52 lone mothers represents a considerable achievement and a substantial body of material about a group of women whose flexibility in time is extremely limited because of their multiple responsibilities of breadwinning, child rearing, household management, and so forth. The difficulty of interviewing lone mothers is further reinforced by the way Japanese lone mothers are not a readily identifiable group of people because 'official' entry points for contacting lone mothers are limited (Peng, 1997).

In gathering the lone mother research participants, I initially began with an open sampling process with 5 lone mothers who had been drawn from my private and professional networks. I was hoping to develop further contacts from all of those 5 research participants but in the event only one passed me additional contacts. Fortunately, however, from this additional source of contacts, a further series of contacts developed since it involved lone mothers who affiliated (i.e. both the regular and occasional members) with either of the two well-established lone mother organisations in Japan: the Hand-in-Hand (*Hando-in-Hando*); and also the Single Mother's Forum (*Shinguru Mazazu Foramu*). Though with variable personal circumstances, it was perhaps predictable that lone mothers who had some associations with lone mother organisations tended to be better connected to other lone mothers. For instance, one lone mother introduced up to 10 potential interviewees with after which I was quite assured about being able to 'snowball' the additional research participants. I felt that people accepted my invitation to take part in the research because rather than being contacted via 'cold calls' or referred by an 'outsider', I was being introduced by their friends or sometimes the senior members of the group after they themselves had participated in my fieldwork. The snowballing approach was a practical way to find lone mother interviewees.

As regards to the definitional issue of who counts as a 'lone mother' for

interviewing, I have allowed a rather ‘fluid’ definition of it; where the ultimate guidance used in defining a lone mother in the fieldwork is her own self-identification in deciding to participate in ‘interviews for lone mothers’. This definitional issue about what constitutes a lone mother family is often discussed in policy terms in relation to the cut-off age for dependent children, whether or not lone mothers live with other adults and so on. In Japan, the predominant formal definition of a lone mother is best assumed to be one given under the Mother-Child and Widows Welfare Law (*Boshi Oyobi Kafu Fukushi Hō*), the most fundamental law of *Boshi Fukushi* (‘mother-child welfare’) to date.⁸ In the context of the current research, however, it felt inappropriate to exclude lone mothers on a basis of the certain age of the children and living arrangements since such approach would necessarily involve replicating institutional politico-social and cultural assumptions rather than those of the lone mothers’. The essentialist constructions of social categories derived from formal policies would be inconsistent with the explorative and empowering stance of the current study that attempts to privilege lone mothers’ own perspectives and interpretations of the self and lifespace.

Reflective of the way the researched lone mothers were willing to participate in my research despite the prevailing precariousness of their subjectivities, many of these lone mothers were keen to contribute to the research; they tended to be those who were feeling the lack of opportunities in politicising their experiences despite their mounting awareness about the social value of their reflections. For instance, one lone mother commented, “there are so many things I have been wanting to think about and share but as you can see, we do not have that kind of opportunity. My days just go by with work and looking after the children. ... It is good that someone is able to do this sort of research of people who themselves do not have the time or resources to do it”. In fact, not one but several lone mothers willingly made

⁸ For details of the Mother-Child and Widows Welfare Law (*Boshi Oyobi Kafu Fukushi Hō*), see Appendix B and also chapter 4.

personal arrangements to have their children to be cared for by others so to be able to participate in the research.

One notable limitation posed by snowballing lone mothers was thus its tendency to exclude lone mothers who remain 'socially invisible' and stay outside the formal and informal networks of lone mothers. That said the participants did include women who had previously experienced such isolation and social invisibility but had changed to become more open about their lone mother status as well as those who were still oriented to remain anonymous in everyday livelihoods other than occasional interactions with other lone mothers whom they met via the lone mother organisations. That is, the snowballing sample of this sort can contain (and did so in my case) lone mothers who can at least talk about and relate to the feelings and experiences of marginalised or hidden lone motherhood, though having the obvious limitation of eliminating lone mothers who remain absolutely invisible in terms of the social identifications. The biased nature of my interview sample with this regard must be highlighted especially in light of somewhat optimistic balance of responses where approximately only one third of lone mothers in the sample currently struggled with doing lone motherhood. My decision to focus on analysing the discourses of this third who were struggling (see chapter 6) despite their smaller proportion in part reflected an attempt to redress the bias in the sampled data towards those who have found more public and successful ways of doing lone motherhood.

Apart from such weakness, it soon became apparent that this particular line of contact incurred a notable limit in accessing lone mothers with the following forms of difference other than the identity as lone mothers: the never-married, long-term separated and 'spousal-death-separated' (hereafter referred as widows) lone mothers, and also those who are in their 20s and 60s+. The geographical variation in the sampling population was also limited mainly to those who lived in urbanised regions, namely in Tokyo

and the neighbouring areas.

I resorted to amend the situation, and attempted to gather the unmarried, widowed, long-term separated, rurally resident, young (in their 20s) and aged (in their 60s+) lone mothers via contacting: 1) the Republic of Boshikatei (*Boshi Katei Kyowa Koku*), another lone mother organisation known for having a considerable number of never-married lone mother members; 2) the quasi-state Mother-Child Groups (*Boshi Kai*), known for having members skewed to the aged and widowed lone mothers; and 3) a number of the non-governmental self-help organisations for the widowed lone mothers. The sample could not though be stratified to reflect other differences such as those in terms of the educational, career, familial, health, racial and sexual backgrounds and so on. At the time nevertheless, I was hopeful of carrying out additional fieldworks and believed that these additional and more targeted sampling were good enough initial efforts in further investigating the emerging themes from the initial open coding process that I undertook simultaneously with the initial process of open sampling.

Given the timeframe of the research, in total, 6 more additional lone mothers participants were drawn via the targeted sampling process.⁹ That is, in the end, the sampled population predominantly involved lone mothers drawn from the initial open sampling. It is worthy to note that my attempt to gain access to widows via the widow organisations came to no avail; I either received no response or a refusal on the basis of protecting the anonymity or welfare of the group members. On the other hand, my contact to the Republic of Boshikatei saw some developments; I was given a permission to place an advertisement on their website and I put on a targeted advertisement, calling especially for lone mothers in the regional Japan, never-married mothers, and young and old generations of lone mothers. A

⁹ The sampled lone mother population by the contact source and the basic characteristics is found in Appendix D.

few lone mothers in regions actually replied via this advert and I interviewed one of them over the telephone after a few exchanges of e-mails. The decision was made to exclude the outcome of this phone conversation, however, since the telephone interview resembled a questionnaire survey and the interactive process was extremely limited in comparison to the face-to-face situation. I found I was unable to establish a quick rapport with the research participant when the interview was conducted over the telephone – my objective to investigate the lifeworld could not be fulfilled this way. I felt that this was caused by the way neither myself nor the interviewee were able to see or recognise ‘what the other is really like’ thus the interaction was limited to the ‘safe play’ of formal questioning and responding direct to the asked questions, which did not help to close the social distance between us. Such response was in fact expected given the sensitivity of issues being dealt – as recounted in empirical chapters, social stigma around lone motherhood remains. Via this channel, I was unable to grasp various aspects of the persona of the interviewee on the other side of the telephone line in a short period of the time at the beginning of the interview session, which I normally (in the face-to-face interview session) reflexively used to establish rapport with the research participants to enable me to ‘get closer’ and ‘more personal’ with them, and make them feel secure on these topics.

Indeed, I found that any lingering social distance was fatal in researching this topic since the ‘real conversation’ whereby the interviewees freely and reflexively explored their experiences of lone motherhood in length and depth began after they had found out about and ‘accepted’ myself to an extent that they were relaxed about letting go of their composed self to a certain degree and engage in exploring their disorganised thoughts and feelings while sitting across the table with myself. Some lone mothers appeared to be willing to talk up-front straight away but this happened when I had already been given that sort of acceptance prior to the interview session either because they were drawn direct from my personal network or

I had been introduced to them personally through their social networks.

Interview

The interview format used for both lone mothers and welfare workers is best described as the semi-structured in-depth interview. As mentioned previously the face-to-face interaction normally made it easier for both myself and the research participating individual to break through the initial social distance between ourselves, which in turn allowed the exchange of information that is not limited to the rigidly composed ‘formal’ answers but involves what might be called the ‘insider knowledge’ expressed in their own words. In addition, it allowed myself to verify the meaning of ambiguous discourses as they arise during the interview. In this process, the caution was taken not to ask specific questions so as to minimise the possible influences over the naturally occurring behaviour. For instance, I would ask ‘can you explain more about...’ and ‘can you elaborate on...’ as opposed to saying ‘do you mean...’ and giving my interpretations.

The interview questions (see Appendix C) were means of tools for investigating the loosely defined research phenomenon. The researched lone mothers were also frequently reminded of ‘the time dimensions and range of livelihood and social relational aspects’, and the welfare workers asked more ‘specific’ questions in addition to the ‘exploratory’ (see Appendix C) – both were designed to uncover as many potentially relevant interpretations around doing lone motherhood as possible within the fixed timeframe of the interview rather to lead the research participants to talk about specific issues or verify hypotheses. More specifically, the use of some ‘specific’ questions for welfare workers reflected the slightly different purpose that the fieldwork survey was designed to serve; in addition for grasping the relevant research themes from the perspective of the individual frontline welfare workers, it also involved an additional purpose of exploring the street level realities of the emerging welfare trends (e.g. de-gendering,

service-orientation and holistic welfare approach) found on the legislative facet (see chapter 4).

Many questions addressed over-lapping topics, depending on the way individual research participants interpreted them and the questions were only used as the guiding framework of the interview process. That is, although attempts were made to ask every question to all the research participants, the interview survey was never firmly structured. More specifically, the principle in the style of the interview survey was such that it would encourage the research participants to take a lead in the conversation and talk about the issues of their concerns in ways of their own preferences. In most cases, the research participants were asked all of the outlined questions but the content of the each interview in terms of the time allocated to each questions and additional questions or topics discussed varied considerably in accordance with differing reactions of the research participating individuals. Indeed, the length of an each interview was officially set to be 40 minutes though both the interview for welfare workers and lone mothers normally lasted longer; 1 to 2 hour(s) on average for welfare workers and typically over 2 hours with the longest ones reaching 5 hours for lone mothers. As for the method of recording the interview discourses, either the micro-recorder or note-taking method was used, depending on the preference of the research participants.

Socio-spatial construction of interviews

I have earlier mentioned about the possible research attention to the various scales of geographical influences upon the discourses of experiential realities. At a more micro-level, in fact, there has been a growing interest in paying attention to the 'microgeographical' influences of the interview setting upon the interview outcomes. Various authors remind the *situatedness* of the interview knowledge or the way interview is an 'in situ' knowledge creation in terms of the 'place' whereby particular identities are

constructed in relation to certain places that in turn have implications for the experience of power relations during the interview (Elwood and Martin, 2000; Hester and Francis, 1994; see Hubbard, 2002; Kobayashi, 1994; Kondo, 1990; McDowell, 1998; see Oberhauser *et al.*, 2004; Sin 2003). The connection of socio-spatial performances with types of interviews is rendered even more important given how chapter 5 illustrates the ways 'official interviews' are sites of the socio-spatial performances of roles assigned to lone mothers. Far-reaching implications of the socio-spatial dimension of knowledge creation in the qualitative fieldwork were learnt during the research. For instance, a site of an interview does play an important role in the way the researched positions one's self in relation to the researcher and also with respect to questions being asked, which is also intertwined with my positionality and approach. Having said that, the power hierarchies or the constructed social relation in particular spaces and places are never singular or fixated and can be negotiated (Sin, 2003). In the current research, I will briefly reflect the microgeographies or socio-spatial experiences of interviews in the following foremost for their usages in the future additional research though in retrospect, it would have been ideal to continue reflecting such influences throughout the research and analysis (Elwood and Martin, 2000).

Socio-spatial experiences of interviews: with welfare workers

Only in one case, I met the worker via a personal contact (her son in this case) and had the meeting in her private time in a coffee shop. From the beginning, we talked about the common point of reference (i.e. her son) and the casual meeting style assimilated more to the one I experienced in interviews with lone mothers (described in the following sub-section). In other cases, workers chose to be interviewed in their office place during their office hours signaling a formal identity (as government official) and formal response rather than a private one. Though the meaning of the socio-spatial construction of the interviews was never singular and under

constant negotiation, I noted certain interesting micro-geographical experiences. For instance, generally, the socio-spatial construction of identity and power relation were such that when the interview took place in his/her office during his/her office hours, the research participant was vividly 'playing the host', taking almost total control over the spatial arrangements of the meeting place. I was normally given the name card with his/her professional identity on it. Reflexively, I would also emphasise my identity as a researcher and positionality as a professional who was keen to engage in the professional exchange of information. At the same time, having entered into the civil servant's workspace, especially during his/her working hours, I would also initially accept my somewhat subordinated positionality or his/her authority in the place; after all, this was what I was willing to take in exchange for the higher acceptance rate for the research participation when the worker were to be interviewed in his/her workplace while s/he was working rather than pushing for more personalised arrangements. As Oberhauser (1997) observed, the interview is an opportunity for participant observation in addition to one for dialogically gathering information, I had also taken it as an opportunity to gain valuable insights into the worker's work environment and the street level of public welfare.

The rigid formality was typically less strong when the interview was with the facility chiefs and the staffs of the Mother-Child Livelihood Assistance Facilities. I had felt that the reason for the difference involved the way there were notable degrees of socio-geographical distance between the facility and the major state bureaucracies such as the local welfare office, which in turn assumingly gave them more discretion with regard to their approach to my research. Indeed, the privately managed facilities (i.e. ones that are contracted by the state) that affiliated with the non-governmental welfare specialist organisations felt they had the least matter-of-factly 'bureaucratic air'.

I had found, nevertheless, both the participating welfare worker and myself would often gradually negotiate the initial formality, especially when the interview took place on one-to-one basis in a private consultation room. Such process ranged; sometimes the worker would begin asking about my personal background in England while other times, the worker would talk about the familial background and I would emphasise a particular aspect of my student identity, willing to hear and learn anything at stake. Importantly, most workers who accepted participating in my interview were willing voluntarily, to a degree more than I expected, to disembodify the formal identity and talk as a layperson, disclosing the 'insider knowledge' here and then. Most of such knowledge concerned the gap in the formal regulations and street level realities, mirroring their socio-political positionality whereby the frontline welfare workers found themselves typically torn between conflicting demands of the authority and the 'street' both of which they serve. I had felt that by disclosing such 'insider knowledge' of how they personally try to reach out to those who fall through the gap in laws and realities, some of them were in fact reacting against and interested in disproving the unfavourable public image of civil workers (e.g. see Mizushima, 1994; Terakubo, 1988) though at the same time, somewhat with an air of resignation. The situation might be increasingly so these days as social hostilities against civil workers loom large as various wasteful use of public money by and privileged working conditions of some layers of public bureaucracy are continued to be scandalised via the media (and social) frenzy largely over and around the pension retrenchments and tax exemptions void for salaried workers.

Notably, obstacles to the process of fostering 'informality' or developing a friendly conversational atmosphere involved having a non-private interview setting such as one that took place over the counter where there were various people around including the office visitors and other staff including those more senior in the organisation. Such settings often encouraged either the researched or myself (or both) to 'play safe' and maintain the 'face' that

is socially expected and prevented the research from tapping into the discourses that might have been otherwise obtained from the more 'informal' self. There were, however, two notable incidences whereby I found it difficult to disrupt the initial social distance between the worker and myself even the interview took place in the relatively private space.

One case involved a near-retirement aged woman officer in a local welfare office who keenly emphasised her seniority by constantly mentioning her positionality as 'a life senior' (*Jinsei No Senpai*) and thus she 'knows everything'. This issue of seniority takes on a special social significance in the Asian Confucian culture; indeed in Japan, *Senpai-Kohai* ('Seniors-Juniors') hierarchy plays a key role, at least in the 'front-stage' setting (see Rosenberger, 1996, 2001), in the organisation of social relations in various social circles at various levels of the society such as in families, schools and workplaces. 'I' as a guest to the space of her authority in her working hours, and indeed as a 'life-junior' in relation to her, I was keenly aware of not challenging her claim of 'knowing everything', which actually resulted in allowing the one-way conversation to continue with myself feeling the 'little space' of an opportunity to actually interact with her.

A somewhat more severe mobilisation of authority occurred in the interview session with a near-retirement aged male facility manager of the state-run Mother-Child Livelihood Assistance Facility whom I met via a referral from the personnel I interviewed in the local welfare office. 'I' as a young single Japanese woman felt that the gender foremost and the age combined with my student identity to a less extent significantly influenced the way the worker approached the interaction with myself. This was always vividly felt when the conversation topic involved the gender based roles such as the way women's (but not men's) child rearing responsibilities are naturalised and women are assumed to be the dependants of men in various state's policies. When I asked questions concerning these gendered issues in such a way as 'what do you think about...', he almost always took offence that I

had even raised the issue. I took such behaviour as his explicit signal that I was behaving inappropriately in his eyes: first, since by simply asking such questions, I was perhaps perceived as challenging his authority despite him being the senior professional; and, second, by appearing to doubt the gender norms, again I was committing a gender crime by challenging female subordination and in turn male superiority. My feelings were paralleled by the way he reminded me several times, at the top of his voice that “when you (referring to me) enter the social world and become a proper member of the society then you would understand” and “even you, once you find a man, marry and become a mother, you would of course be that way”. That is, at many points in the interview, he would quite blatantly approach myself as an improper social subject as being a young student and also a gendered subject.

I had attempted to disrupt the oppressive one-way conversation and these imposed subjectivities, without upsetting him, by emphasising my *Kikoku-Shijyo* (‘children returning from abroad’) identity thus positioning myself as someone outside the social hierarchies that operates in Japan. I had found many times in the fieldwork that strategically labeling myself as a ‘cultural foreigner’ and instrumentally deviating myself from the shared socio-national identity that way would actually worked in my favour since it helped to give myself a certain degree of leeway to circumvent other’s social expectations around my behaviour as a young Japanese woman in relation to people with particular identities and certain situations. With this particular worker, however, such a strategy fell on deaf ears and I had found myself experiencing the verbal sexual harassment.

In the end, I almost decided to give up paying respect to the interviewee and indeed to ‘his space’. What kept me playing the subtle negotiation of positionality and power relations rather than opting for more outright challenge ultimately rested upon the fact that the meeting had taken place via referral. Ethically, I felt obliged to end the meeting without serious

troubles in order to ‘maintain the face’ of my referee that in turn worked to disable my ability to act otherwise, ultimately causing my experience of culturally imperialised and powerlessness to a significant extent.

Socio-spatial experiences of interviews: with lone mothers

Disrupting the differential power status or the socially constructed distance between the research participant and myself was typically easier in interviews with lone mothers. Such favourable situations rested on a number of factors. First, I was almost always ‘playing the host’ for the interview, being able to set the tone of the meeting from the beginning. Second, lone mothers often chose to be interviewed in coffee shops and always in their private times, which I found were socio-spatially more neutral in comparison to say when the interview was held during the worker’s work hours in the workplace. Third, I was able to emphasise my particular identity as a child of the lone mother household. Notably, in terms of the privacy and noise-level and so on, the coffee shop as interview location was far from the textbook ideal but the casual environment made it easy for myself to present the interview as an opportunity for informal ‘friendly’ chat. I assume that the comfort level experienced by the research participating lone mothers in relation to the place was also safeguarded to a certain degree by the way I had always accepted their preference over whereabouts of the interview place.

As for the last point about my particular personal identity (i.e as a child of the lone mother family), I do not mean to fall into the reductive identity politics whereby researchers who share the same identities as the researched are simplistically assumed to run the less risk than others (i.e. those assumed to be the ‘cultural strangers’) for distorting the ‘voice’ of the researched (see Schick, 2002). Indeed, Schick (2002) gives an insightful account of how the physical presence of a racially oppressed group in the research (both as researchers and researched) does not ensure the accurate representation of

the 'voice' of that racially oppressed group. The 'insider-outsider' issue is multi-faceted, and indeed there are limits of any assumed insideness. On one level, indeed I was an insider as a Japanese female and a child of the lone mother family though also displaying different positionality through other personal profiles.

I nevertheless found that making my familial background known to the researched typically had rescued me from being considered as one of those interviewers likely to abuse the honesty of interviewees, which several lone mothers said they feared in relation to media reporters. I felt that my identity was typically taken to be an exemplifier for my research aspiration, influencing the way I felt accepted as a researcher for lone motherhood instead of with suspicions with regard to my research aspirations. Importantly, in turn, such a quick development of trust or the constructed legitimacy 'to speak for' lone mothers did help to establish a good rapport with participating lone mothers. Also, more importantly, my familial background not only set them at ease but considerably enabled me to build a quick rapport with research participants since I was not only able to show genuine empathy but also share various personal knowledge related to lone motherhood in Japan. Indeed, by being able to do so allowed myself, at the same time, to show my willingness to also be the knowledge informing party on the very personal topic that I was asking the other to reveal.

Even sharing the similar identity though indeed, I encountered a problem in circumventing the overt experiences of power relations (see Gilbert, 1994; see Katz, 1994) with a few lone mothers who keenly focused on my difference of the foreign educated identity, conceiving it as a privileged class and showing resistance to my attempts at a rapprochement. In these cases, I had typically received somewhat sarcastic remarks such as "it must be good to have a privileged life". Such stance on the part of the interviewees not only made it difficult to carry out the so-called 'friendly' conversation but also significantly influenced the way lone mothers framed

their answers; they tended to keenly compare their situations in comparison to those enjoyed by the privileged if not resorting to give short answers to the formatted questions. In these cases my presence itself played an unexpected (and unwanted) influence in the creation of interview discourses. This was far from ideal whereby I myself would end up playing an enabler role simply for the participating lone mothers to talk about lone motherhood reflexively in relation to their selves at present and in the past. In a way, this was a problem of my own making since I had always presented my resume to the participating lone mothers in a quick attempt to win their trust. It appeared that either my act in itself or the process involved in revealing the resume was perceived as an arrogant assertion by some lone mothers and backfired in some interviews.

Another relatively challenging situation arose in two cases when the interview took place in the home of the research participant. In one case, for instance, I found myself sitting one-to-one with a lone mother in a small flat. Though it was quiet and private, I myself found it 'too close' to the researched lone mother and whether because of my discomfort in itself or the influence my reactions had on the participating lone mother, the interview session was probably one of the most formally conducted sessions where the lone mother was unable to fully express her feelings. Another time, I was invited for lunch at a respondent's home where two of her children and a child from the neighbourhood were flopping around her small apartment. At one level, it was a great opportunity to get to know her better personally and also for participant observation, gaining valuable insights into the situation behind her words. The drawbacks, however, involved practical problems trying to talk without being continuously interrupted by the children and the many ensuing difficulties in transcribing the recorded tape because of the noise-level. Moreover, when the mother began talking about her infant-care neurosis (*Ikuji Noirōze*) and her problem of 'bullying' the children (for the state's discourses and empirical illustration over this illness see chapter 4 and 5 respectively), the children began responding to

her comments, until in the end I was compelled for ethical reasons to change the conversation despite actually wanting to hear more on the topic. The situation here may be compared to household research with a couple where the husband's presence can significantly distort women's discourses (see Valentine 1999) though in this case it was more of myself circumventing the development of the conversation.

Returning to the general perspective of the interview with lone mothers, the longer time spent with lone mothers compared to the welfare workers reflected the way individual lone mothers tended to need a longer time in making-sense of their thoughts on the interview questions. For some lone mothers, as they themselves actually admitted, such situation mirrored the way they previously either did not have or avoided an opportunity to voice their situations, and they thus found themselves initially unable to 'make sense' and interpret their experiences. In these cases thus, much of the interview process involved actually simply listening, sometimes for several hours, to their contradictory claims, general background, regrets and frustrations, and so on. That is, while the respondents thus include a number of articulate lone mothers assimilated to the reflexive 'active observer' approach (see Potter, 1996), the large component of the fieldwork with lone mothers involved participatory action research. In the participatory action research, both the author and the researched lone mothers formed the knowledge seeking parties while in the active observer survey, the author took a more moderate involvement in the sense-making and self-interpreting process of the research participants.

I found that some lone mothers unexpectedly found themselves empowered to talk at length despite their initial hesitations, especially because they took comfort in the way I was outside their social networks. This was particularly the case for the lone mothers who were concerned about being socially identified as such; the interview session was probably taken as a 'safe venue' to disclose personal issues, which they had contained in themselves

more than they wished and perhaps realised. This process of simply being able to talk about their marital backgrounds without the fear of being judged by someone in their social network and social repercussions appeared to be a therapeutic and also a constructive experience, which one lone mother actually commented “sorry that I was going round and round but it was enlightening. It was also a good stress-buster”. The foremost worry about this effect was the ethical dilemma of allowing what appeared to be a psychologically strenuous activity in part with the potentially serious implications without an ability to offer a valid aftercare (see Bondi, 1999, 2005). For instance, one long-term separated lone mother began considering divorce proceedings having participated in the research, which she claimed had helped her to organise her thoughts to make such a decision. In hindsight, I felt that the capacity to provide or at least refer the researched lone mothers to the professional aids for both the psychological and legal aftercare would be ethically ideal for conducting this type of research.

Analysis of the fieldwork data

Reducing and ordering materials involved selecting and interpreting processes. In terms of the selection process, it involved coding of the interview discourses via which the emerging themes or patterns were uncovered according to the grounded theory approach. More specifically, all taped conversations were transcribed by myself and put together with those conversation recorded by hand. All the survey data was then coded line-by-line under various code names and these coded data was organised into general categories or themes. Each emerging theme was then examined and checked for: 1) the utmost common conditions for which the theme emerged; 2) some other patterns in which the theme emerged; and 3) the outlier cases that did not fit into any of the patterns found. Finally for analysis, the key finding was examined in relation to the relevant concepts and contextual issues described in chapters 2 and 4 of the thesis. Once the key findings were summarised and analysed, the relevant parts were

translated into English.

For conducting the coding process, the theoretical sensitivity leveraged my personal and professional experiences (i.e. as a researcher); I especially relied on my personal knowledge of lone motherhood, stemming from my familial background of being brought up in a lone mother household in Japan and also my involvement in the present research whereby I was able to read about issues surrounding lone mothers and also get to know a considerable number of lone mothers personally. In the case of coding the survey data on welfare workers, the theoretical sensitivity was developed via reading the existing literature and also material learnt through the actual interview and coding process itself. In terms of the fundamental issue about the interpretation of the data, I took the stance of reporting the research participants' views of reality as actually expressed, and then my ways of conceptualisation to substantiate the meanings expressed. The expressed views were taken at the face value (in terms of a data for myself to analyse) although the 'truth' of personal views was of course always contestable. Though caution must be taken with the fore-mentioned situatedness of the interview discourses, I made the choice to treat them as truthful where the expressed views reflect the empirical realities. Whether these accorded to some 'objective' reality was in many ways less important than these were the truths as they were experienced by the respondents.

From the initial coding process, the research identified two marked groups within the sample: one that experienced problem-ridden lone motherhood, and another that by and large practiced lone motherhood differently. Moreover, *an issue of whether or not the self identified with and resisted the role of a 'good mother' keyed around the Japanese feminine ideal of the 'good wife, wise mother', emerged as a powerful factor that separated the differing self and life narratives.* The gendered subjectivisation of self that is the process whereby the self is made into a particular gendered subject (see chapter 2), *and women's differing responses have thus come to form the key*

themes of the study to evaluate the question of what is problematic about lone motherhood. A more conventional analysis, such as one focused on lone mothers' marital status was rejected; the traditional lines of categorisation did not emerge as the most useful point of analytical focus to understand the differing experiences of lone mothers. By this, I am not saying that the identity focused analysis is the only way to deepen our understanding of one's experiences of lone motherhood. In chapter 6, for instance, the thesis highlights how the research can further benefit from more geographic analysis – the significance of everyday materiality underpinned by micro-geographical circumstances is dealt there briefly. In chapter 7, I also tentatively suggest an issue of cohort shift. Whilst the thesis sought to reflect on multiple intersecting scales at play, it opted to explore *in-depth* the significance of gendered self subjectivities in one's experiences of doing the self as a lone mother – a key process that emerged to affect one's experiences of doing lone motherhood in Japan, yet one that suffers from depoliticisation despite the significance. In addition to the effects, the thesis illuminates various processes fostering the depoliticisation of these crucial issues in understanding lone mothers' welfare.

As for the coding of the interview data of welfare workers, it resulted in the finding of a few topics that were popularly raised under which either the common or varied views, and experiences were found. Critical insights were also gained with regard to the recent welfare trends found on the analysis of legislative discourse. In retrospect, the fieldwork with the welfare workers was relatively limited, especially in terms of the 'intricate details'. Partly, this mirrored the shorter length and the more formal type of interview that took place and the way I included 'specific questions' as earlier mentioned which had the effect of stopping the research participants' from exploring in-depth the topics of their own interests. This nature of the data is reflected in the way I resorted to briefly covering a number of different themes that emerged in interviews (see chapter 5) rather than offering detailed illustrations on a focused theme via actively incorporating the expressions

of the research participants in the text (see chapter 6 and 7). Prior to introducing these empirical illustrations, the next chapter will make a visit to the public policy discourses surrounding lone mothers in Japan that offer a formal background to the empirical knowledge presented in the following chapters.

Chapter 4

Japan's Precarious Transformation: gender and public welfare in the state's formal discourses

The present chapter reviews the changing and unchanging features of the national ideology of gender and welfare in post-war Japan - through a focus upon the high level policy discourses of the Japanese state. It reveals the modernisation project witnessed in the post-war Japan. More specifically, how it includes women especially in terms of the social contract and particular subjectivisations, the extent of change witnessed in the post-war Japan in terms of its 'minimalist state' strategy of modernisation as discussed in chapter 2, and ramifications on the self subjectivity of lone mothers form key parts of my consideration. The chapter follows a twin track approach of examining the Japanese state's discourses around lone mothers alongside the wider state ideological climate about gender and welfare issues since focusing solely on the state's discourses about lone mothers would leave out the wider policy context.

The consideration in this chapter begins with an overview of the dominant ways the state has dealt with public welfare and lone motherhood in the early era of post-war Japan. It will be followed by considerations of the contemporary state-led efforts of renewing the social order of the nation namely, the social security reforms and the efforts to create a so-called 'gender-equal society' (*Danjo Kyōdō Sankaku Shakai*). The chapter concludes with a summary of what I frequently refer to as the precarious modernisation of Japan, especially keying the consideration to the ways it is affecting lone mothers.

Early developments

The first part of the chapter provides a chronology of the changing official policies of the national ideology on welfare and gender, and the state's

approaches to lone motherhood mainly during the post-war Japan up to the restructuring era that began in the 1990s – highlighting how much remained constant behind the changing legislation. It begins with an introduction of the national welfare and gender climates in the pre-war Japan while highlighting some of the key welfare and gender principles such as the notions of mutual aid, public welfare comprising a ‘last resort’ measure, ‘good wife, wise mother’ (*Ryōsai Kenbo*), and the infamous ‘family system’ (*Ie Seido*). The main consideration will be keyed around the establishment of the American democratic citizenry rights to welfare and equality with the enforcement of the new Constitution of Japan. More specifically, the chapter critically evaluates the impact of the democratic principles over the state’s formal welfare and gender approaches, and the related approaches to lone mothers prior to the reform era. It will suggest the persistence of tacit assumptions in state practices, belie formal moves to equality, suggesting that there is a contradictory legal climate, which feeds into gender code precariousness in today’s Japan. This will be set against a broad heuristic chronology of eras where an early militaristic era was marked by a bio-politics focused upon a natalist vision of securing a national future, followed by a post-war period where formal claims for equality and welfare were imposed in a western constitution that overlay ongoing more traditional social and legislative codes that emphasised self reliance and mutual aid together with gender based roles. This period was marked by tensions between rising welfare engagement as the state endeavoured to modernise yet persistently being attached to ideologies of a minimalist state and a discourse of Asian exceptionalism. The growth of state support was rapidly curtailed by the economic crises of the 70s that reinforced these latter trends to smaller states and communal support, only in the last 15 years has a political commitment to equality become connected to a renewed bio-political concern with the demographic health of the nation.

The background and historic events

In archaic (628-1191CE) and feudal (1192-1867CE) Japan, the typical social welfare consisted of mutual aids among the next of kin and the village community. A Confucian hierarchy of rights and responsibilities of assistance was especially influential in the maintenance of welfare systems in the latter period. The public assistance provided by the state was the last in the hierarchy of social welfares. During the Meiji era (1868-1912), the 1874 Compassionate Assistance Rule (*Jyukkyū Kisoku*) was enacted as a part of the modernisation effort¹⁰. As in the former period, nevertheless, the state's welfare principle rested with the localised mutual aids among community residents. The following Taisho era (1912-1926) saw the onset of the Taisho democracy that gave rise to various social projects based on humanitarianism.

With respect to the national gender ideology, it was the ideal of 'good wife, wise mother' (*Ryōsai Kenbo*) introduced earlier in Chapter 2 that dominated the gender code and indeed the subjectivisation of women in the imperial Japan at the end of the nineteenth century. The invented norm of womanhood was furthermore strictly regulated and maintained via the 'family system' (*Ie Seido*) of the Meiji Civil Code (*Minpō*).¹¹ The 'Ie' was composed of family members in a single patrilineal bloodline, and women were severely repressed in the system. Indeed, the womanhood allowed under the 'family system' was the androcentric notion of womanhood in caricature – for instance, the system actually defined wives as 'incompetent persons' (*Munōryoku Sha*), requiring them to have the husband's authorisation for making any legally binding agreements. The system also deprived women of their rights to inherit if there were men in the household.

The early Showa era (1926-1989) was marked by rising militarism in the 1930s and it was manpower needs that loomed large to be the state's prime concern. It was thus a particular bio-politics that came to the centre stage of

¹⁰ This is typically seen as the Japanese equivalent of the 1601 Poor Law in England.

¹¹ The 'Ie Seido' existed prior to the stipulation of Meiji Civil Code in 1898 but only among the limited sections of the society such as the Samurai class.

the state's governance of welfare and gender whereby the notion of 'good wife, wise mother' has thus come to embrace pro-natalism. That is, women became highly subjectivised as mothers that were to bear and rear children for the sake of the nation (see Uno, 1993) – the national slogan of 'reproduce and multiply' (*Umeyo Fuyaseyo*) reveals somewhat the outright bio-politics of the time, which can be contrasted to the more recent bio-political efforts discussed later in the chapter.

The landmark changes came with the fall of the emperor Showa in August of 1945, bringing the authoritarian regime to halt.¹² In the midst of the post-war chaos the occupation government (1945-1952) established the 1946 Constitution of Japan that endorsed universal democratic rights of citizens, including the right to welfare, and the state's duty to guarantee that right (Article 25, Constitution of Japan).¹³ With reference to the national gender ideology, democratic principles of respecting people as individuals (Article 13, Constitution of Japan), and equality in marital and familial relations (Article 24, Constitution of Japan) became endorsed, and the discrimination by race, creed, sex, social status or family origin (Article 14, Constitution of Japan) became prohibited. Since the Constitution is defined to be the supreme law of the nation (Article 98), and it disseminates the state's duty to uphold the Constitution (Article 99), the society has appeared to witness a historic event where it attained paramount codes of practice involving ones prohibiting the gendered subjectivisation of women, and safeguarding women's access to welfare rights as individual citizens.

¹² On the legislative side, the Emperor had been positioned as the head of the empire and disseminated as the 'divine' since the onset of the Constitution of the Empire of Japan in 1889 until the arrival of the new Constitution of Japan in 1946 when the Emperor became defined simply as the 'symbol' of Japan. The Emperors of that period (Meiji, Taisho and the early Showa until the end of the wars), however, had been predominantly symbolic as the ruling bureaucrats and militarists instrumentally used the imperial institution to unite the Japanese public. The regime change of 1946 thus might be better understood as the closure of such ruling structure.

¹³ The chaotic social order was such that as many as 5 million demobilised servicemen returned to the war-devastated Japan. So serious was the economic crisis and the extent of the social loss that policymakers faced an immediate task of relieving the nation from the mass poverty and social unrest. The actual excerpts of the Articles of the Constitution dealt in the chapter are shown in Appendix B.

In retrospect, however, the state resisted what would have been an epochal shift in the national ideology of gender and welfare. For one thing, the post-war Civil Code (*Minpō*), one of the six fundamental codes in Japan (*Roppō*), never fully absorbed the principles of the new Constitution and retained paternalistic legacies despite the major modification made in 1947.¹⁴ The new Civil Code for instance retained the old ideal of familial mutual aid, allowing the family court to compel kin as distant as ‘relatives in the third degree’ subject to the duty of mutual support (see Article 752, 877, Civil Code), mirroring the persistence of the minimalist state. Also, although the amendments to the Civil Code resulted in the dissolution of the ‘family system’ (*Ie Seido*) the modified Civil Code allowed the continuation of the ‘family register’ (*Koseki*) one major reminder of the ‘family system’ used by the ruling bureaucrats to govern the public with far-reaching implications on the significance of patriarchal familism in both the welfare administration and in various aspects of social life in Japan today. To this day, indeed, there remain various equality concerns with regard to the Civil Code such as the prohibition of the use of different surnames by the married couple, which in Japan serves to maintain the social practice whereby marriage still means women to take up the husband’s surname as almost as a matter-of-course and indeed *enter* the ‘*Ie*’ of the husband unless it is specially arranged to be otherwise.

The establishment of a contradictory legal climate was further reinforced with the dissemination of the archetype of the post-war welfare system found in the 1950 Recommendation Concerning the Social Security System (*Shakai Hoshō Seido Ni Kansuru Kankoku*) submitted by the Advisory Council on Social Security’s (*Shakai Hoshō Seido Shingikai*). The social security system (*Shakai Hoshō Seido*) has become defined in such a way that ‘it will not harm the notion of one’s autonomous responsibility’ hence

¹⁴ The six fundamental codes involve the Constitution, the Civil Code, the Commercial Code, the Code of Civil Procedure, the Criminal Code, and the Code of Criminal Procedure.

the emphasis on the social *insurance* system, which people themselves are involved in the payment for the insurance of welfare risks. The state does accept the role of guaranteeing the minimum standard of living for those whose dire poverty cannot be managed by such system of insurance alone. However, symbolically, such public assistance measure the so-called Livelihood Assistance (*Seikatsu Hogo*), the major cash-benefit for the poor, has become positioned as the 'last resort' safety net that is to be the *secondary means* of the public welfare in relation to *all other means* of welfare resources *including* the Civil Code defined mutual aids.¹⁵ The selective-relief typical of the benevolent welfare practice indeed persisted under the now-defunct Livelihood Assistant Law (*Kyū Seikatsu Hogo Hō*) held from 1946 until 1950, and likewise after further amendments made in 1950 (see Mizushima, 1990; Terakubo, 1988) whereby the old ideologies such as the 'able-body to work' survived in practice. Also, the household became stipulated to be the basic unit of administration for this important means of public assistance thus fostering the continuation of the family oriented welfare, making one's entitlement to the public assistance dependent upon the economic situation of the cohabiting members of the household – that is, women's financial dependence on men (and others' reliance on women to shoulder the 'unpaid *labour of love*' as dealt in Chapter 2) became reinforced given the socio-structural circumstances including the employment practice that blatantly supported the gender based roles. Notably, as a matter of interest particularly to this thesis, the local welfare office has discretion to void this 'household unit rule' and consider the claimant's economy separately to other cohabiting members of the same household, making the street level of the state a particularly critical site of consideration.

In addition to the engineered precariousness in the state's position with regard to guaranteeing people's constitutional rights to welfare or resilience

¹⁵ Article 4 of the Livelihood Assistance Law (*Seikatsu Hogo Hō*) endorses that the Civil Code defined mutual aids must come first, before the Livelihood Assistance can be disbursed.

of the 'minimalist state' that has sat back-to-back with the 'economic first' rationality of the Japanese state (Goodman and Peng, 1996; Takahashi and Someya, 1985), the malleability of the state's position can be also identified in the 'state retreat' of the 1970s - again exemplifying the enduring minimalist state. A surge of welfare policies and improvements in pensions and social welfare services prevailed during the high growth period of 1955 up till the first 'oil shock' of 1973 - the Prime Minister even declared the year 1973 as the 'first year of the welfare era' (*Fukushi Gannen*) whereby the Japanese state appeared to breakaway from the 'economic first' pragmatism typical of the rapidly industrialising nations (see Tabata, 1990) towards the 'westernised' notion of the welfare state (see Watanuki, 1986). With the onset of the 1973 'oil shock' and the associated economic downturn, however, the nation was to witness the state retreat soon after, exemplifying the politico-economic pragmatism led and the 'learn-as-we-go' approach to welfare governance (Goodman and Peng, 1996; Peng, 2000; Roberts, 2002). The art of the state retreat involved the rhetoric of 'welfare reconsideration' (*Fukushi Minaoshi*), and the culturally essentialising calls or the exceptionalist thesis whereby the 'Japanese-style welfare society' (*Nihongata Fukushi Shakai*) became disseminated that placed strong emphasis on the self-help of individuals, ultimately relying on functions of the family, neighbourhood and community as well as the welfare provision of private companies (see Hiwatari, 1993; Tabata, 1990; Watanuki, 1986).

Finally, it is worthy to note that the welfare administration has developed a notion of the 'model household' (*Moderu Setai*), crystalising the gendered social contract or the gender-unequal way women are included and subjectivised in the post-war modernisation project of the Japanese state. The pension administration, for instance, assumes the model household to be one that consists of a male company employee who earned the average income for 40 years and the full-time housewife who never worked full-time. In fact, with an establishment of the so-called 'type-III insured person's

system' through the 1985 Law on the Partial Amendments to the National Pension *etc.* (*Kokumin Nenkin Hō Tō No Ichibu O Kaisei Suru Hōritsu*), the spouse of an insured employee (who is categorised as the 'type-III') who does not make more than 1.3 million a year became facilitated with the payment of the National Pension (*Kokumin Nenkin or Kiso Nekin*) without paying the premium – that is households with dependent housewives became provided with a preferential treatment. Notably, households with wife whose annual income is less than 1.3 million became credited with various preferential treatments, including the 'spouse tax credit' (*Haigūsha Kōjo*) that gives tax exemption on the husband's income as well as the wife's entitlement for the medical insurance without premium payments.¹⁶ These again show a sense of how the social model and norm is indeed not merely a socially normalised but the politically powerful social category, which in turn reinforce concerns over the welfare of lone mothers who are by definition the norm deviators.

That is, despite the establishment of the new Constitution of Japan that disseminated the American democratic principles such as individuals' equal rights to welfare, and the state's duty to guarantee them, the Japanese state through a variety of other legal codes sustained its minimalist approach and the gendered project - the state in fact proactively affirmed a social order premised upon a highly gendered household arrangement. The next section will find out how lone mothers were subjectivised in the state's formal discourses in the national context recounted above.

The state's conceptualisations of lone motherhood

Reflective of the two-parent family norm with the husband and wife ascribed to the gender based roles that became ingrained in the welfare administration, the state's identification of lone motherhood in the white

¹⁶ The 'spouse tax credit' (*Haigūsha Kōjo*) became established in 1961. The establishment of an additional measure called the 'special exemption for spouse' (*Haigūsha Tokubetsu Kōjo*) followed in 1987.

paper of the Ministry of Health and Welfare (i.e. *Kōsei Hakusho*) was one that emphasises their difference to such norm. For one thing, it was with a label of the ‘mother-child household’ (*Boshi Katei*) that lone mothers were socially identified – that is, the key subjectivity being the mother, intertwined with her child as will be recounted later. Moreover, typically emphasised was its ‘peculiar circumstance’ (*Tokushu Na Jijyō*) of being the ‘member-lacking family’ or ‘fatherless household’ (*Ketsuin Kazoku*).

The social connotation of being ‘fatherless’ was such that the husband or father in the white paper discourses was regularly identified as the ‘pillar’ of the family in economic and social as well as psychological terms – by implication, the lone mother household was meant to be dysfunctional as defined by lack and deficiency from the norm. The assumed centrality of the role of the husband hence the social connotation attached to the absence of the particular household member was such that lone mother households in the white paper were regularly referred to as ‘people with handicaps’ grouped together with the disabled and elderly. Lone motherhood was marked as the problem in itself.

During the high growth period from the 1950s to 1970s, conceptualisations that view lone mother households as social problems were added in the white paper discourses perhaps reflective of the state’s ‘impulsive’ welfare expansion as recounted earlier. For instance, it was said that the pace of progress in developing the public measure for lone mother households fell short of the rapid economic growth and urbanisation thus in effect resulting in the ‘handicapped’ social groups namely the elderly, disabled and lone mother household to become the stranded echelon of the prospering society (e.g. Ministry of Health and Welfare, 1970). Further, the state drew attention to the problem of lonely lone mothers in regions driven to commit suicides as the society goes through a process of rapid urbanisation (e.g. Ministry of Health and Welfare, 1966). However, the state typically drew on an idea of ‘social responsibility’ in ‘helping the handicapped to catch up’

with the rest of the prospering populace – that is, while it moved away from subjectivising lone mothers simply as problems, there emphasised was the benevolent appeals asking for the distributive notion of justice.

These trends were marked by the archetype of the ‘mother-child welfare’ (*Boshi Fukushi*), the general label to describe the public welfare for lone mothers, that consisted of the ‘guidance’ based consultation, basic supply-side focused employment assistance that in fact channeled lone mothers into feminised jobs as a matter-of-course and supplemental means of financial assistance, none of which sought to tackle structural injustice or deliver welfare in terms of lone mothers’ citizenry rights – recounted more in below.

In terms of the key legislative developments, with the establishment of the Mother-Child Pension (*Boshi Nenkin*) and the Mother-Child Welfare Pension (*Boshi Fukushi Nenkin*) under an umbrella legislation of the 1959 National Pension Law (*Kokumin Nenkin Hō*) bereaved lone mothers became provided with pensions as ‘dependant wives’. As for the non-bereaved lone mothers, a major welfare measure came with the 1961 Child Rearing Allowance Law (*Jido Fuyō Teate*) whereby they earned entitlements to the Child Rearing Allowance - a comparable counterpart to the public payouts available for the bereaved lone mother households (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 1961 and 1985). With it also came a definitive statement that divorce is not an appropriate event to be conceptualised as an insured event of pension schemes thus rejecting the public payout on that account (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 1961). That is, differential treatments became established depending on the reasons for becoming a lone mother. While the bereaved lone mothers came to be facilitated with the state’s guaranteed payouts on a basis of their subjectivities as wives, entitlements of the non-bereaved lone mothers who were mostly divorcees became keyed to their subjectivities as mothers, and provided in terms of the child welfare – though both gendered, this is a significant difference given what

motherhood entails upon the self, earlier dealt in chapter 2. The difference was also seen in the amounts payable as the bereaved lone mothers became provided with as twice as much better amount of public payouts compared with those available for the non-bereaved, mirroring the fosterage of the divided subject positions among lone mothers – the bereaved being allocated the ‘deserving’ position relative to the non-bereaved as the culpable poor.

It is worth noting, the establishment of the child welfare oriented welfare exemplifies the affirmation of the pre-war legacies rather than a trend towards absorbing the democratic principles of the Constitution. Indeed, we can locate antecedent of such child welfare oriented welfare for lone mothers where they are having to access their rights through child’s welfare and indeed upon their gender based role as early as in the Taisho Period (1912-1926) whereby existed an idea that the nation ought to safeguard the welfare of lone mother households ‘for the healthy growth of the child’ (see Ministry of Health and Welfare, 1997). In fact, though the coverage was limited to lone mother households with infants under the age of 1, the 1929 Relief Law (*Kyūgo Hō*) began providing relief for lone mother households with an astonishing concept that establishes the mother and child to be ‘one-bodied’ (*Boshi Ittai*), blatantly collapsing the innate and acquired as discussed in chapter 2 while wrongly naturalising women’s role in child rearing, and violating the self of lone mothers in terms of wrongly intertwining it with the child’s – a mythology that to this day remains in the legal codes.

The ensuing 1937 legislation of the Mother-Child Protection Law (*Boshi Hogo Hō*) that substantiated the coverage to include lone mother households with children under the age of 13, notably originated from a bill called the Mother-Child Assistance Bill (*Boshi Fujo Hōritsu An*) that laid out the foundational principles with which public assistance for lone mothers began taking its roots in Japan. The bill emphasised a child focused perspective of

welfare for lone mothers, ultimately for the benefit of the nation. It was with an idea of the maternal protection (*Bosei Hogo*) or more specifically on a basis that (apparently) the mother was the preferred carer of the child from the perspective of the child's welfare that lone mothers earned their entitlements – the mothering role thus forming the integral part of women's claim for the state's protection and support.

The 'one-body' ideology of the mother and child (*Boshi Ittai*) was formally endorsed to be the core axiom of public welfare for lone mother households under the establishment of the 1964 Mother-Child Welfare Law (*Boshi Fukushi Hō*), the origin of the 1968 Mother-Child and Widow Welfare Law (*Boshi Oyobi Kafu Fukushi Hō*) that is the most fundamental law of public welfare for lone mother households (*Boshi Fukushi*) to date.¹⁷ This focus upon the child, with the mother's welfare subordinated to it, was formulated as an official doctrine by legislation in 1964 that organised previous developments and said:

From a perspective of the child's welfare, regardless of the social situation in which that the child is present, the terms and conditions for the rearing of a healthy child both in emotional and physical terms must be maintained hence the importance of providing necessary protection, consultation and fosterage. At the same time, necessary assistance must be provided for the mother herself so to maintain her healthy and cultural livelihood and *enable her to fulfil the child rearing responsibility*. In other words, the fundamental philosophy with regard to the mother-child welfare establishes that the welfare

¹⁷ Until the stipulation of the 1964 legislation, the public welfare for lone mother households developed in a piece-meal manner. For instance, lone mothers received public assistance via the child welfare laws as well as under the Mother-Child Additional Sum Scheme (*Boshi Kasan*) that came with the 1950 amendments to the now-defunct Livelihood Assistance Law (*Kyū Seikatsu Hogo Hō*) and also the 1952 Mother-Child Loan Related Law (*Boshi Fukushi Shikin No Kashitsuke Tō Ni Kansuru Hōritsu*). For the detail of the Mother-Child and Widow Welfare Law see Appendix B.

of the mother and child must be safeguarded
monolithically (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 1964;
emphasis added).

That is, the doctrine assumes the mother's role in child rearing thus in turn naturalising it. The gendered subjectivity as mother versus citizen, meant that here the social identification of being the 'good' mother came to be an important factor to access entitlements. Moreover, the doctrine reveals the way the public welfare for lone mother households is really about a means to serve for the child welfare end thus mothers' welfare being seconded to the child welfare (Peng, 1997). The notion of 'one-body' treatment is thus only rhetorical - the rhetoric of the one-body treatment rests on an instrumental account of lone mothers as mothers the rearer of children. In return for earning entitlements for public welfare thus lone mothers became 'contracted in' as mothers.

The white paper discourse and the legislative conceptualisation put together reveal the ways the state identification of lone mothers became keyed to their child rearing practice and also the 'fatherless' (in terms of the household) status, which in fact meant that the lone mother's entitlement became highly sensitive to her status as a 'single mother without a male to depend on' belie their citizenry rights for equality and to welfare endorsed by the Constitution. More specifically, the legitimacy of lone motherhood became keyed to being recognised as a 'good mother' and one 'without a male to depend on', the social identifications of which are both highly impression or appearance-based. The entitlement for the Child Rearing Allowance (*Jidō Fuyō Teate*) that excludes lone mothers who are socially identified to be involved in the actual marriage situation or *de facto* marriage (*Jijitsu Kon*) well exemplifies this social trend, expecting the welfare of the mother and child to be managed within the household if the mother was to (appear to) get involved in a relationship.¹⁸ The state in this

¹⁸ The term, *de facto* marriage is used against the connotation of marriage that is legally

light is indeed an alternative patriarch (see Walby, 1990), which especially in the case of Japan is one of the extremely reluctant (in terms of fulfilling its 'breadwinning' role), positioning itself merely as a subsidiary means to the individual male patriarchs. Notably, the ambiguity involved in the classification of the *de facto* marriage has been notorious, subjecting lone mothers to public scrutiny over personal life at various levels - anything from having a male visitor to the house and phone conversation with the former partner, and to receiving irregular sum of money from the former partner thus reinforcing the significance of the 'deviant role' that is to be played by the lone mother claimant. That is, the appearance-based conformity to the deviant role became an influential though unwritten criterion for successfully accessing the entitlement.

Further, the *de facto* marriage rule is significant in terms of its definition being not exactly concerned with the fact whether or not men in concern is actually playing the breadwinning role and providing the regular maintenance for the household. That is, it allows the exclusion of lone mothers from the welfare entitlement who may be unsupported. In a similar vein, it was treated as a matter-of-course to revoke the unwed mother's entitlement to the Child Rearing Allowance once the child's father formally acknowledged the child as of his own (*Ninchi*) regardless of the actual financial contribution made by the father to the household although this procedure was waived in 1998. That is, the state's procedure paralleled the gender based role yet it remained reticent to enforce stringent measures to ensure men in concern to fulfil the gendered breadwinning role thus mothers are provided by the regular maintenance. The welfare of lone mothers in this respect thus became contingent upon either their abilities to staying clear of the risk of being socially identified to be in relationships or the *willingness* of the men in suspect to provide.

The introduction of the new Constitution *per se* thus failed to relinquish the

binding.

making of the androcentric social order. The consideration here has recounted the ways the Civil Code, and the welfare legislations and administrations afforded the state to build social structures and ideological climate that nurture the family based welfare arrangements or more specifically the highly gendered household arrangements, and the gender based roles for people – the welfare fate of lone mothers were very much allowed to be left with individual men's willingness to provide and the social identification of them as 'good mothers' and 'without a male to depend on' through which lone mothers were afforded to access the state's welfare provisions. The developments of legal structures specifically around lone mothers mirrored the ways the Civil Code and the major welfare legislation resisted epochal shifts in the national gender and welfare ideologies endorsed by the new Constitution. In fact, the review around the state's approaches to lone mothers here exposed risks involved in the family-oriented welfare in the androcentric social order and the state's precarious duty to guarantee people's welfare rights. It has highlighted that the lone mother was the subject to be treated with suspicions as to her normality, and thus to be rehabilitated. Her legitimacy as a welfare seeker rested predominantly on a basis of her child rearing role and the 'fatherless' household status hence made to access the entitlement through the child's welfare and conditional upon being a good mother and single thus severely constraining their life choice and style, especially given that these are both highly appearance-based identification.

These early welfare efforts, thus not only positioned the state as the last resort but also pathologised lone mothers as deviants on a basis of the highly gendered subjectivisation, belies the insertion of modern welfare and equality principles of the new Constitution.

Thinking more into the recent post-war Japan, the 1980s saw an entry of an ideal of 'normalisation' (*Nōmarazēshon*) into the welfare discourses around the disabled and elderly following the 1981 International Year for Disabled

Persons (*Kokusai Shōgaisha Nen*), promoting that a society ought to fully incorporate the livelihood of people who require social assistance such as the mentally and physically disabled in their locality with an idea that they are in fact ‘normal’, not the subjects to be treated in a discriminating manner (e.g. see Ministry of Health and Welfare, 1981, 1988 and 1999).¹⁹ Similarly, in the area of gender equality, with the International Women’s Year in 1975 as a turning point, the Japanese society witnessed the promulgation of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law between Men and Women (*Koyō No Bunya Ni Okeru Danjo No Kintō Na Kikai Oyobi Taigū No Kakuho To Joshi Rodōsha No Fukushi No Zōshin Ni Kansuru Hōritsu* – popularly called the *Danjo Koyō Kikai Kintō Hō*) in 1985 (effected in 1986). This law in outcome failed to move beyond the ‘equal treatment or equal with protection’ debate, leaving the androcentric social structure and relations intact – it though finally signaled the re-discovery of the notion of equality as equal opportunities rather versus merely as protection of women. The chapter next recounts the reform era that began creeping up during the 1980s but more truly marked out since the 1990s.

Recent developments: the new social order?

This second half of the chapter considers recent developments in the national ideology of public welfare and gender, and the implication on the state’s subjectivisation of lone mothers in the formal discourses of the state. More precisely, the consideration will be first keyed around the social security reform that began in the 1990s whereby a number of new trends were established in the area of public welfare. Secondly, it will consider what it appears to be an epochal shift in the national ideology of gender with the state-led dissemination of the ‘gender-equal society’ (*Danjyo Kyōdō*

¹⁹ This concept thus emphasises the locally rooted and in-home based care that would allow those people (which increasingly include the elderly as well) to continue living in their familiar surroundings. Such stance is in a stark contrast to the welfare measure that caters for a specific social group in the ‘live-in’ facilities, which tended to stigmatise the facility users – one of the most notorious cases being the public ‘quarantine’ measure taken against the people suffering from leprosy (*Hansen*) (formally abolished with the termination of the Law for Preventing Leprosy (*Rai Yobō Hō*) in 1996).

Sankaku Shakai) law, with special attention paid to implications upon the white paper discourses. The conceptual novelty of the 'gender-equal society' will be highlighted in terms of the way it abandons the distributional ideal of justice and traditional call of the androcentric notion of equality. On another hand, however, it will be highlighted that the 'gender-equal society' is the state's renewed bio-political strategy – raising a question of how far the Japanese women are being emancipated from the state's project. Lastly, both as a means to test the state's commitment in the 'gender-equal society' concept and overview the implication on the state's approaches to lone motherhood, it deals with both the changing and unchanging ways lone motherhood is dealt in the recent state's discourses.

The social security reforms and the 'gender-equal society'

Under the leadership of Hashimoto regime (1996-98), there was an ambition to establish a new socio-economic system enacted through the Six Reforms (*Muttsu No Kaikaku*) of public administration, public finance, social security, economy, financial system and education. Under the related central government reform, the nation saw an en-bloc ministerial reorganisation in January 2001 whereby ministries and advisory committees became agglomerated on a functional basis.²⁰ Notably, the Ministry of Health and Welfare (*Kōsei Shō*) that deals with the welfare of lone mother households became agglomerated with the Ministry of Labour to form the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (*Kōsei Rōdō Shō*). In the area of public welfare, with the rhetoric of the Social Welfare Basic Structure Reform (*Shakai Fukushi Kiso Kōzō Kaikaku*), a number of changes became enforced.²¹ Most notably, under the Bill on Partial Amendments to the Social Welfare Work Law *etc.* (*Shakai Fukushi Jigyō Hō Tō Ichibu Kaisei Hōan*) various welfare

²⁰ The previous 1 office and 22 ministries were reorganised into 1 cabinet office and 12 ministries.

²¹ See the 1996 interim report on the Direction of the Social Security Structural Reform (*Shakai Hoshō Kōzokaikau No Hōkō*) for an overview of the formally disseminated direction of public welfare reforms.

laws became amended, including the landmark legislation of the Social Welfare Work Law (*Shakai Fukushi Jigyō Hō*) that was rewritten for the first time in almost 50 years (enforced in April, 2000).

A prevailing theme of the welfare reform is ‘user oriented’ welfare provision. With it, the progressive deregulation and market competition were introduced in the hitherto conservative field of the public welfare. In parallel to such trend of marketisation, the despotic welfare delivery method called ‘*Sochi*’ whereby the state literally controlled the aspects of public welfare to be provided to claimants including the content and the service provider to be used became replaced with a contract-based system, making the claimants to be the ‘clients’ of the state at the formal level of thinking. Such change of heart on the part of the state with regard to the welfare claimant from the subject to be regulated to the one to be serviced is foremost reflected in the revised language used in formal welfare discourses. For instance, as a part of the popular welfare menu, the word of ‘*Shidō*’ (‘guidance provision’) has been increasingly replaced with ‘*Shien*’ (‘assistance provision’) – emphasising that the state helps rather than shapes the needs of clients. In a similar vein, ‘*Nyūsho*’ (‘an entry into a place’) is used to refer to a process of admitting individuals to public welfare facilities rather than the previously dominant term of ‘*Shūyō*’ (‘detainment’). The following section finds, however, the implication on the actual situation of empowerment at the street level has been notably less progressive, exemplifying a notion that a change in the language in itself fails to capture the subtlety of the unequal power experienced by the deliverer and consumer of the public welfare services (Clough, 1990).

The major new entry to the formal discourses also involved the ‘universal’ notion of public welfare. In contrast to the previously dominant notion of public welfare as the ‘last means’ to be used by some specific social groups and the social categorical based operations, it together with the emphasis placed upon the ‘shared needs’ of the populace that public welfare is ‘for

everyone' set a trend towards the normalisation of public welfare – finally, making a step towards realising the Constitutional welfare principles. What is more significant, however, is the rhetoric of 'social fairness' of cost sharing irrespective of the different generations and social groups that has accompanied the endorsement of universalisation rather than the indiscriminate coverage that normally associates with the universalising notion of public welfare. That is, the notion of universality has not been exactly used in a dualistic sense of the universal versus the means-tested coverage. The chapter will indeed later illuminate the continuation of the 'minimalist state' that is now to be supported by different groups of people equally sharing burdens with structural amendments to allow it – which has been in fact exacerbating the problems facing the socially disadvantaged as the pace of structural amendments lag behind the enforced responsibilities as equal citizens as scripted.

On the gender front, the society has witnessed a major state-led renewal initiative with a slogan of the 'gender-equal society' (*Danjo Kyōdō Sankaku Shakai*). It is a law-endorsed shift, through the 1999 Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society (*Danjo Kyōdō Sankaku Shakai Kihon Hō*), which disseminates:

[A] society in which both men and women, as equal members, have the *opportunity to participate* in all kinds of social activities at will, equally enjoy political, economical and cultural benefits, and *share responsibilities*. ... A gender-equal society is a society *built by* men and women as equal partners. The realization of a truly affluent society is dependent on the establishment of a social framework that allows individuals to choose *various lifestyles regardless of their gender*, and without being bound by such rigid, stereotyped gender roles that assume that child rearing

and nursing are exclusively women's duties, while men are the workers, tax-payers and pension renderers who support the nation. ... We, each and every one of us, need to *rethink our prejudiced notions of gender-based roles*, so that we may realize a society where men and women can participate together in politics, at workplace and at home, and lead exciting and fulfilling lives (Cabinet Office [www.gender.go.jp]).

That is, the 'gender-equal society' concept takes on hitherto much the socially ignored question of 'equal to whom?' in the topic of equality – human rights of women are taken up seriously including in terms of eliminating violence against women (outlined in the priority objectives of the 'first plan') which is no longer merely about assimilation or protection. As all the common trends of the masculinising notion of equality and merely distributional ideal of justice are abandoned, it now encompasses a notion of equal participation and choice irrespective of differences. More specifically, structural injustice is taken up as an equality agenda – both the social construction and governance are to be evaluated with the gender-equal perspective thus the 'fraternal contract' being 'discovered' as a legitimate area of the policy concern. Moreover, finally the equality concept here sees the hitherto 'women's issues' in a fuller picture in terms of the social relations – it advocates transcendence of gender-based roles both by men and women, aspiring to support both men and women to harmonise their efforts in work, family life and the community participation. No longer it is about the male-value oriented normalisation or standardisation, it is a major project of *undoing* the stigmatisation of the hitherto devalued differences in androcentric ways, involving the major reconstructions of social structures and relations that would nurture the 'equal opportunities' for groups of people with differences. The emphasised are the diversity of choice and the choice of lifestyles - the society has finally found a state-led legal code that articulates and reinforces the constitutional principles of



treating people equal and as individual citizens. It is a major step towards social justice in a sense of our previous discussion in chapter 2 that advocates the diversity ideal, and indeed de-subjectivisation of women from the gendered role.

The shift in emphasis that this new version of gender equality entails can be illustrated in the white paper discourses of then the Ministry of Health and Welfare since 1998. In the 1998 version, for instance, the state draws on the dominant gender culture that expects women to 'do the housework, and child rearing as well as the paid work' while husband's role remains singularly ascribed to the paid work. However it then moves to suggest that the standardised circumstances of the society have 'robbed' the household of comforts and prosaic life and intensified the child rearing burden felt by the mother, hindering young generations from having dreams about married life and child rearing. Here, that is, we find the ways the issue of gender based roles is taken up more as a concern with regards to marriage, and indeed child rearing. The same 1998 white paper while conveying an ideal society 'where one can have dreams and hopes for the family and child rearing' and an ideal family that is affirmative of 'multiple values and diversified lifestyles maintained by independent individuals freed of the fixated gender based roles', it incorporates the idea of 'gender-equal society' into the troubled demography, and makes an emotional appeal for people's duty for the next generation.

That is, the state's concern is not solely or even primarily a project of bringing justice to women but rather a continuation of the bio-political concerns over population. The 'gender-equal society' is indeed 'quite openly' the state's newly found tool to pursue bio-politics. No longer, the Japanese state's bio-political programming is as 'loud' as the war-time pronatalist call of 'reproduce and multiply' (*Umeyo Fuyaseyo*), it remains to be about the population governance as a part of its nation-building project. There has been a marked change however - no longer afforded to

despotically pursue the strategy of technologising women to be the baby bearer and rearer as before as will be explained next (also see chapter 2), the Japanese state's bio-political strategy is now keyed to *enticing* women to see forming families and having children as *valued goals* through creating the 'gender-equal society' whereby women are promised to be emancipated from their gendered subjectivities, and gender-equal opportunities to pursue life choices and styles including if they were to get married, and decide to bear and rear children.

The idea of gender-equal society emerged not merely in the wake of the increasing international pressure facing the state to live up to the best practice as a modern state but also along side the state's identification of the nation's troubled demography. As early as in 1989, in fact around the same time as the emergence of the maturing low growth economy, there has been a discovery of the 'demographic crisis' or the '1.57 shock'.²² The state's demographic concern has been progressively extended to involve the balance of population hence a notion of the 'few-child with rapidly ageing society' (*Sgōshi Kōrei Shakai*), which actually denotes the looming threat over the potential collapse of the social security system and indeed the long-term economic viability of the nation (see Maruo, 1986).

The semi-governmental institute carefully monitors that Japan's population is expected to peak at 127 million in 2006 and thereafter follow the path of depopulation, and moreover the working-age population has already begun declining after 1995 and the elderly population surpassed that of children by 1997 (IPSS, 2004).²³ The proportion of the elderly population in the total

²² Although the total fertility rate has been falling already since 1974, the '1.57 shock' of 1989 has been recorded as an emergency situation because it has declined below the previous lowest of 1.58 in 1966 and also well below the rate of 2.08, needed to 'replace' the population at the current level. By 2002, it has sunk to a record low of 1.32, which compares to 1.6 of the average total fertility rate of developed countries (IPSS, 2004). The total fertility rate reflects the mean number of children a woman will have given the current age specific birth rates.

²³ The working-age population includes persons aged 15 to 64 years of age while the elderly population includes persons aged 65 years and over. The child population includes persons aged 0 to 14.

population is projected to increase from 17 percent in 2000 to about one-quarter of the population in 2014 and reach 36 percent level by 2050; that is, 1 in about 2.8 persons will be over 65 year of age. In the language of the 'old-age dependency ratio', the nation is expected to see a rise from the existing 26 percent level to the 50 percent range in 2030, then eventually up to 67 percent in 2050; which means the change of ratio from 3.9 labour forces supporting 1 senior resident to eventually 1.5 to 1.²⁴ Moreover, among the trends monitored is the postponement of marriage hence the reduced years of child bearing years, and more recently the falling fertility level of married couples (IPSS 2004, also see 2002a) or the 'bellies on strike' (see Ueno, 1998; Peng, 2001), which is identified to be underpinned by the excessive gender based role life (see Ministry of Health and Welfare, 1998), causing reluctance on the part of women to engage in the highly gendered marriage and motherhood.²⁵

Though the pro-natalist tone is carefully avoided, and no longer the mothering role naturalised, the 'gender-equal society' initiative that has emerged as the state's bio-political strategy has been prone to carry through the gendered subjectivisation of women as mothers, the reproducing bodies. The contradictory impulses and continuation of traditionalist views, fused with bio-political concerns over birth rates can be seen when the former Minister of Health, Labour, and Welfare no less, who is supposed to be one of the key public figures heading the 'gender-equal society', fails to accord public comments to the 'gender-equal' and diversity principles and calls women as 'baby-producing machines' (*Kodomo O Umu Kikai*), young people desiring to marry and have more than 2 children as 'wholesome'

²⁴ The old-age dependency ratio is used as an index to measure the level of support of the working-age group (15-64), through comparison of the relative size of the aged populations versus the population of the working-age group; calculated by dividing the aged population by the population of the working-age group.

²⁵ IPSS (2004) finds that the mean age at first marriage increased from 24.3 (1973) to 27.4 (2002) for women and 26.7 (1973) to 29.1 (2002) for men. The link between the delayed marriage and childbearing years is based on a very low level of non-marital childbirth; only 1.6 percent. Such trend partly results from the very low prevalence of cohabitation; only 2 percent are found to be cohabiting with their partners without marriage among women in the age group of 20-24.

(*Kenzen*), and moreover advocates the importance of making policies to fit such 'healthy' desires normalising a particular household form as in the past.

The 'gender-equal society' initiative has, however, set about a remarkable trend in the redefinition of gender roles in terms of the state's white paper discourses, and resulted in various policies or the re-organisation of social structures in effect setting a trend towards releasing women from the stereotyped gender roles. That is, the 'gender-equal society' initiative is not merely rhetorical. For one thing, to say the least, it has set about a trend of questioning the traditional maternal culture and opening up the motherhood norm to alternative practices. The same 1998 white paper indeed puts the maternal culture of '*San Saiji Shinwa*' ('three-year-old infant mythology') discussed in chapter 2 that heavily draws on the mother-child bond for the healthy upbringing of the child under a critical review, and highlights the child rearing neurosis (*Ikuji Noirōze*) as one risk of the excessive social expectations placed upon mothers. That is, it casts doubt upon the current practice of motherhood, and an attempt is made to dislodge motherhood of the kind of 'moral lever'.

On the fatherhood front, we also find the state's re-invention attempt. Indeed, equally or somewhat more radically, the same paper 'discovers' paternal responsibilities – the 'maternal lack' has been the regular ground of stigma but the notion of 'male lack' finally introduced. I say 'discovers' because of a notion that the Japanese society is a 'fatherless society' as there has been a trend of Japanese fathers to spend a company-centred life away from the home and family life (see Jolivet, 1997). In the paper, it is advanced that most aspects of child rearing, apart from some biological aspects of motherhood such as being pregnant, giving of birth and breast-feeding can be carried out by the father. Moreover, it is said that either one of the parents can in fact carry out both the so-called maternal and paternal functions, implying that the gender based roles with regard to

parenting can and should be transcended. Notably, the new vision of fatherhood was delivered in the state's led mass media campaign. It was the active fatherhood put on the poster (for the reprint see, Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2000: 247), featuring then a famous pop star's husband holding a baby with bold-lettered messages saying: 'We will not Let a Man Who does not Rear a Child to be Called Father;' and 'Spend More Time Being the Father'.

Further, various legislations were enacted to re-organise the social structure, aiming to assist both men and women to transcend the gender based roles. To say the least, various social systems such as the current system of employment, pension, taxation and social security have been formally placed under the government review.²⁶ To name one of the actual changes made, the national pension system was amended in June 2004, resulting in the introduction of a measure that gave wives the right to claim as much as half of the husband's wage-related part of the pension such as the Employee's Pension (*Kōsei Nenkin*) at the time of divorce.²⁷ The significance of the change is such that previously, getting divorced in the old age to many of the housewives has not been a viable option since divorce has meant losing the large portion of their pension that is formally placed under the name of their husbands despite the wives' decades of non-momentary yet crucial contribution for the attainment of that part of the pension.²⁸ This ameliorated rule of the pension payment is thus expected to provide women with a better life choice in the old-age. The change is, however, far from complete in a sense of freeing women (especially the young lone mothers with dependent children) from the gendered subjectivity

²⁶ For more details, see Specialist Committee on Surveying Effects under the Council for Gender Equality, published in December 2002.

²⁷ The subject of this measure is the couple who divorce after April 2007. After April 2008, the wife's entitlement will be automatically defined to be half of that of the total if the wife qualifies to be the 'type-III insured person'.

²⁸ The 'type-III insured person' is entitled to receive the basic national pension (*Kokumin Nenkin* or *Kiso Nenkin*). However, the amount payable by the basic national pension alone barely reaches the standard set by the Livelihood Assistance (*Seikatsu Hogo*) that guarantees the minimum standard of living hence the importance attached to obtaining the wage-related portion of the state managed pension.

– for instance, the major failings of the amendment include the ways it has kept the ‘type-III insured person’s’ system’, and also the ‘model household’ both earlier mentioned as underpinned by the assumption of gender based roles.

Women’s social position and indeed their human rights have become better safeguarded also via the enforcement of the 2001 Law for the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims (*Haigūsha Kara No Bōryoku Boshi Oyobi Higaisha Hogo Ni Kansuru Hōritsu*). This has been a significant intervention, especially in terms of the way it has finally broken the state’s *laissez faire* approach to the issue of intra-familial abuse.²⁹ Moreover, together with the rapid legislative progress in the area of elderly welfare services that has set a trend *towards* releasing women from the family care, there have also been a number of well publicised initiatives aiming to help parents to reconcile paid work and child rearing.³⁰ The so-called Angel Plan (*Enzeru Puran*) of 1994 was the first notable public initiative that aimed to create a ‘child rearing friendly environment’ by the offer of the better provision of affordable housing for families with children and lessening of the economic burden associated with child rearing.³¹ The provision of flexible childcare via the diversification of childcare services received a special attention under the additional initiative of the Five-Year Project on the Flexible Childcare *etc.* Measures (*Kinkyū Hoiku Taisaku Tō 5-Kanen Jigyō*). Such efforts of ameliorating the child rearing environment continued in the following year via amendments to the Childcare Leave Law (*Ikuji Kyūgyō Hō*, stipulated in 1995). This law has been renamed as the Childcare and Family Care Leave Law (*Ikuji Kaigo Kyūgyō Hō*) under

²⁹ In fact, a year earlier, the issue of child abuse was also, for the first time formerly defined under the 2000 Child Abuse Prevention Law (*Jidō Gyakutai No Boshi Tō Ni Kansuru Hōritsu*).

³⁰ The landmark legislations in the area of elderly welfare include the 1990 Gold Plan that has been replaced with the 1994 New Gold Plan and the following 2000 Gold Plan 21 as well as the 1997 Law Concerning Insurance for Nursing Care (*Kaigo Hoken Hō*).

³¹ The formal name of the Angel Plan is the 1994 Basic Direction for Future Child Rearing Support Measures (*Kongo No Kosodate No Shien No Tame No Shisaku No Kihonteki Hōkō Ni Tsuite*).

which workers became entitled to take leaves for child rearing *and* in a significant shift for the care of other family members.

Despite the publicity, however, both the Angel Plan and the Childcare and Family Leave Law have failed to make any real impacts - to say the least, the economy and the local government struggled to implement measures of the Angel Plan in full (Peng, 2000) and the latter involved a structural flaw in that it excluded a large number of women workers in the atypical employment market from the coverage as it only covered workers in the regular employment.

The New Angel Plan was found in 1999, providing special attention to various types of childcare services and an issue of accessibility to daycare centres.³² The significance of the New Angel Plan rests with the way it has put the Japanese-style employment practice, notoriously known for its 'work-first' culture, under a formal review towards one that is more flexible - which should allow working parents to reconcile working and child rearing.³³ This is a critical effort since the idea of participating equally in parenting is conceived to be a 'castle in the air' for many men unless they are released from the prevailing corporate culture (Roberts, 2002) - corporations are indeed ones of the highly influential agencies that influence people's behavioural pattern of combining work and family or the 'work-life balance' (e.g. see Perrons, 2003). The new plan, however, again failed to tackle the previous bottle-neck located at the delivery end or the street level of the state bureaucracy - although local governments and

³² The 1999 Basic Principles to Cope with the Fewer Number of Children (*Shōshika Taisaku Kihon Hōshin*) is the formal name for this new plan. The daycare centre provides full day centre-based care for pre-school children aged 0-6 years old.

³³ More recently, the role of firms in providing more flexible work environment has been highlighted in both the Cabinet-submitted the 2001 Basic Direction for Policies Supporting Work and Childcare Compatible (*Shigoto To Kosodate No Ryōritsu Shiensaku No Hōshin Ni Tsuite*) and the 2002 Measure against the Declining Birth Rate: Plus One (*Shōshika Taisaku Purasu Wan*) that replaced the New Angel Plan. See also the 2003 Measures to Support the Development of the Next Generation Law (*Jisedai Ikusei Shien Taisaku Suinshin Hō*) and the 2003 Law for Basic Measures to Cope with Declining Fertility Society (*Shōshika Shakai Taisaku Kihon Hō*).

non-profit social welfare organisations became entitled to establish the out-of-school hour care centres with the amendments made to the Child Welfare Law in 1997, many local governments remained reluctant to build the new care centres due to financial reasons (IPSS, 2004).

The issue of delivery is indeed an important one in addition to the conceptual integrity of the reform efforts hence the attention of the current thesis given to the street level of the state (see chapter 5). At the critical time when various new ideas and systems were introduced in the area of public welfare, there has been the devolution of administrative power from the central to the lower levels of the state. That is, the responsibility with regard to the welfare administration involving the budget, and formulation as well as the implementation of welfare measures was relocated to local governments. On one hand, there is a view that the local governments are better suited to identify and provide for the localised needs hence also to lead the 'user oriented' welfare. On the other hand, however, there are fundamental concerns of how far the local governments are financially and technically capable of acting upon the designated changes (see Osawa, 2000). Since many of the newly disseminated initiatives under both the welfare and gender reforms came as the 'effort duty' (*Doryoku Gimu*) of the local governments thus as a matter of choice of the street level bureaucracy, their commitments in delivering the new measures in the actual operations became critical factors in evaluating the novelty of the reforms. The next chapter will in fact discover the street level realities that are somewhat a 'world apart' from the one depicted at the level of the formal discourses. Prior to the street level consideration, the next will recount the state's recent approaches to lone mothers. While revealing the recent changes in the state's formal discourses around lone mothers, it will evaluate the state's commitment to the reforms.

Historical shift: lone motherhood as a lifestyle choice

One epochal change that came to be seen with the dissemination of the 'gender-equal society' initiative has been the new notion of lone motherhood, written in the white paper discourses. In contrast to the previous one that emphasises the difference to the two-parent norm, a trend now is of affirming lone mother household as 'one of the modern-age lifestyles' (see Ministry of Health and Welfare, 1998). The state's ambition at the level of the white paper discourses is seen in the way the 1998 white paper also attempts to normalise the unwedded motherhood, one of the most stigmatised sub-categories of lone motherhood in Japan. More recently in the '5-year Plan' of the 2003 Basic Principles Concerning the Measures for Improving and Stabilising the Livelihood of Lone Mother Households and Widows (*Boshi Katei Oyobi Kafu No Seikatsu No Antei Tō Kōjyō No Tame No Sochi Ni Kansuru Kihonteki Na Hōshin*), the state advances that lone mother household is 'not a special type of household in the modern age' thus it is simply 'one type' of other family formations, reinforcing the state-led trend of normalisation and de-stigmatisation of lone motherhood as one of the diversities.

Moreover, the gender transcending perspective of parenthood also became reflected upon the state's position towards the role of absent fathers. More specifically, the government has taken a measure in the year 2003 to ease the court proceedings for maintenance (hereafter referred to as the Child Rearing Fund (*Yōiku Hi*)) that is led by the custodial parent and taken against the absent father who fails to pay the legally arranged sum for the child. In fact, a welcome change has been not the increasing attention paid to the absent father's financial duty *per se* but more the way the inclusion of fatherhood into the policy agenda has in effect eased all-the-common social trend of only motherhood is scrutinised in relation to the child's welfare, which in turn makes womanhood pervasively linked to if not eclipsed with motherhood.

The trend towards the cultural change has only begun however. For one

thing, in addition to the lack of public attention to the caring/rearing duty of the absent father, a conceptual ambiguity remains in the act of seeking the Child Rearing Fund from the absent father – a social consensus is yet to be attained that it is really about the child's welfare right and the father's duty towards the child as a non-custodial parent. This is an important point of social consideration, especially because the recent debate about the father's financial duty has surfaced in relation to the retrenchment discourses concerning the Child Rearing Allowance (*Jidō Fuyō Teate*), which is still viewed as a complementary measure to the pensions paid out to the bereaved lone mothers, that is ones they receive on their gendered subjectivities as dependant wives. To put it more accurately on the gender-equal principle, the mother's role with regard to the attainment of the Child Rearing Fund ought to be emphasised as a responsibility of the custodial parent in safeguarding the child's right that is conceptually far apart from one of the female seeking the paternalistic support to compensate for the lack of the breadwinner in the household.

In terms of the trend towards respecting differences or indeed relieving lone mothers of the public scrutiny, the entry of the universalising notion of public welfare in the public welfare for lone mother households has brought about a 'needs-based' approach that put the needs-based layers (e.g. the layer that needs legal advice, regular counselling or emergency protection) as the emphasised site of policy discourses (see Ministry of Health and Welfare, 1996).³⁴ In turn, such shift has thus resulted in de-emphasising the differences in terms of the type of household or marital status while an increasing emphasis has become placed upon the 'shared needs' among different social groups, such as those of the two-parent, lone mother and father households.

As earlier warned, however, the entry of the universalising notion into the

³⁴ See the 1996 interim report, called Concerning the Direction of Measures for and Profiles of Lone Mother Households etc. (*Boshi Katei No Jittai Tō Shisaku No Hōkō Ni Tsuite*).

public welfare has been Janus faced. The worrying side of the entry of universalisation into the welfare for lone mother households has been that the increasing emphasis on 'shared needs' is paralleled by the trend of downplaying the significance of 'different needs' of groups of individuals in society that is yet to be free of structural inequalities. That is, the irony of the recent normalisation is that differences are normalised and accepted as diversity on one hand, different needs that arise from differences have become progressively ignored and unsupported on the other – such a contradictory stance hardly accords to the 'gender-equal society' ideal that advocates different groups to become fully incorporated into the society.

In the area of welfare provision for lone mothers, such trend of injustice has been seen in the ways the rhetoric of social fairness that accompanied the universalising idea of public welfare has been used to continue the retrenchment of lone mothers' cash-based public welfare – mirroring the persistence of the minimalist state doctrine in terms of its welfare commitments. It began in 1985 when the Child Rearing Allowance (*Jidō Fuyō Teate*), the major cash-benefit for lone mother households was cut on a basis that lone mother households were supposed to be afforded with a self-sustainable environment with the greater opportunity for women to work, improved childcare centres and enhanced loan system available for lone mothers (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 1984, 1985).³⁵ The 1998 amendments that lowered the upper income bracket excluding 70 thousand households from the benefit coverage used the rhetoric of 'social fairness with other households with children'. In 2003, further amendments were stipulated whereby a stricter means-tested scheme came into the payment calculation and an idea of placing the 'time limit' upon the entitlement became introduced (see Appendix B).³⁶ Beginning with the 1985

³⁵ In 1985, the government introduced a new system of payment for the Child Rearing Allowance. Under the so-called two-tier system, differential rates of payment became stipulated accordingly with one's income-levels, which in effect stripped the benefit entitlement of lone mothers whose annual income exceeded 3 million yen.

³⁶ The 2003 amendments to the Child Rearing Allowance legislated a basic time-frame on the entitlement for the allowance, that is to be 5 years, after which a defined proportion of

amendments, indeed, the cash benefit specific to lone mother households has been progressively withdrawn while the policy emphasis shifted to the more generalised child and family care services and the labour market as well as the role of the absent father.

Considering the Child Rearing Fund from the absent father to mean a regular source of income for lone mother households exposes the limitation and controversy of such policy trend. The 2003 National Survey on Lone Mother Households *etc.* The Debrief Report (*Zenkoku Boshi Setai Tō Kekka Hōkoku*) finds that only 34 percent have an arrangement with the absent father over the payment with this regard, and only 18 percent are found to be actually receiving the Child Rearing Fund from the absent father at the time of the survey. About a half of those who have not made an arrangement cited the perceived incapability of the father to pay (in terms of his willingness or/and practical capacity) as a reason for not making the arrangement, and also as much as 21 percent cited their own preference for ending contact with the father as a reason. These findings exemplify the social realities around the Child Rearing Fund that it is neither being conceptualised as a means of the child's welfare right nor perhaps a practical means to be thought as a regular payment in the current social infrastructural circumstances. An over-reliance on this means of income thus risks penalising the already flimsy economy of lone mother households.

In terms of the 'work solution' or specific work measure for lone mothers, there has been a number of positive movements such as the ways the government became subjected to submit annual reports on the special employment measure for lone mother households to the national diet with the 2003 Law on Partial Amendments to the Mother-Child and Widow Welfare *etc.* (*Boshi Oyobi Kafu Fukushi Hō Tō No Ichibu O Kaisei Suru Hōritsu*), and the 2003 Law on the Special Measure Concerning the

the entitlement will be terminated (with special discretion given to lone mother households with infants under the age of 3 and children with disability or serious illnesses).

Employment Assistance for the Mother of Lone Mother Household (*Boshi Katei No Haha No Shūgyō No Shien Ni Kansuru Tokubetsu Sochi Hō*) (see Appendix B). As some newspapers reported it as the establishment of ‘first ever White Paper on lone mother households’, it is fair to acknowledge that such legislatively mandated change exemplifies the ‘first-ever’ notable commitment of the government to give considerable and specific attention to the employment situation of lone mothers for over some lengthy period of the next 17 years.³⁷ In terms of the policy advancement in the content of the employment measures, progress has been seen in the way an attention is now paid to the demand-side of the labour market in contrast to the previous tendency to narrowly focus on improving the employability of lone mothers – this is a crucial shift since the demand-side problems for lone mothers and indeed women are still widespread in Japan.

However, the state’s effort in improving the in-work conditions of women workers has been rather limited to elementary efforts over improving the working condition of peripheral workers.³⁸ Impacts of the ‘gender-equal society’ initiatives upon the gender bias in the employment market are yet far from the ‘gender-equal’ situation. The ‘work solution’ is highly controversial equally in a sense that the progress in policy trend earlier noted must be seen more in terms of the conceptual advancement at the ‘top-level discourses’ of the state rather than one of the actually delivered at the street level. Most innovative measures seen in the legislative discourses are more appropriately seen as the formal recommendations or guidelines of the central state, leaving the actual delivery to the whim of the local governments. The take-up rate of the new policy initiatives especially at lower levels of the state (e.g. *Shi/Chō/Son*) has been notably marginal so far (table 4.1). Even at the prefectural level (*To/Dō/Fu/Ken*), for instance, the

³⁷ The Law on the Special Measure Concerning the Employment Assistance for the Mother of Lone Mother Household is a legislation of specified duration; it is effective from August 2003 until March 2020.

³⁸ e.g. the 1985 Labour Dispatch Law (*Rōdōsha Haken Hō*) for temporary workers; and the 1993 Law Concerning the Improvement of Working Conditions for Part-Time Workers (*Tanjikan Rōdōsha No Koyō Kanri No Kaizen Tō Ni Kansuru Hōritsu*).

new measure such as the Regular Employment Conversion Incentive Payment merely achieved less than 50 percent take-up rate (see Appendix A). Despite the publicity coverage on various employment-related initiatives and the subsidies from the central state made available, the street level progress has been a 'world apart' from the conceptual advancement, reinforcing the significance of the street level of the state as a research site.

The recent government effort of tackling both the supply- (e.g. policy effort that enhances the employability of lone mothers such as flexible childcare and training provisions) and demand-side of the labour market (e.g. policy effort that enhances the labour demand for lone mothers by prospective employers such as subsidy or other incentive provisions) is far from reaching maturity and having any meaningful effects on the employment situation of women, let alone lone mothers. The approach of retrenching the major cash benefit for lone mother households when the employment market can neither expect to provide a viable means of income nor guarantee even the access to the employment to all lone mothers (see chapter 2) is one that fuels concerns over the problems identified earlier in chapter 2 of the ineffectual social transfer and the working poverty. The active labour market policy treating lone mothers the same as others and ignoring their different needs that are magnified by the pervasive socio-structural injustice is thus highly contradictory to the rhetoric of 'social fairness'.

Finally but not least, one major disappointment has been the way the 'one-body' principle about the mother and child whereby lone mothers are made to access their welfare entitlements through her gendered subjectivity remains to be erased from public welfare discourses – the deep seated injustice facing lone mothers, and one that is highly contradictory to the key principle of the 'gender-equal society' initiative that is to emancipate women from their gendered subjectivities.

Chapter summary

The present chapter has considered the formal discourses of the Japanese state around the national ideology of gender and welfare, and also elicited the implications of the state's approaches to lone mothers. Here I will summarise the key features of the precarious modernisation in the post-war Japan that have been recounted both in terms of the national context and one specific to lone mothers.

Precarious modernisation in the national context

The enforcement of the new Constitution of Japan was a milestone whereby the society attained what are positioned to be the supreme codes of the society, defining people as equal citizens with equal rights, and the state's duty to uphold them. However, the state allowed other legal codes and administrations that foster a social order reliant upon the highly gendered household arrangements. For instance, the chapter highlighted the maintenance of the Civil Code through which women face gendered subjectivity, and 'contracted in' as carers to relieve the state of its welfare duties – these belie the constitutional principles. That is, the Constitution was a major injection of modernity to the Japanese society that continued to pursue the nation-building project with the gendered traditional principles alongside it.

In the recent reform era, public policy discourses around gender and welfare shifted dramatically with the Japanese state's new bio-political strategy in the name of the 'gender-equal society'. The chapter recounted the ways this 'gender-equal society' initiative embraces the key issues of bringing justice to women, which I have discussed in chapter 2 – the fraternal social contract, gendered subjectivities facing women, the structural injustice versus the mere re-distributional notion of justice, and equality as equal opportunities versus the assimilation of differences to name them. That is, the conceptual

advancement around equality seen in the formal discourses of this state-led initiative is remarkable. In terms of the talk of historical shift to late modernity as dealt in chapter 2, the 'gender-equal society' ideal certainly signifies the late modernity unfolding in Japan as envisioned is a society that afford its citizens the project of self and life that is a matter of personal choice or more realistically supports people's choices about how they wish to organise their selves and lives. Moreover, in terms of its shift as the bio-political strategy, what is epochal about the new initiative is that no longer, the Japanese state despotically endeavours to technologise the self of women into the baby bearer and rearer, but rather it attempts to recreate the family forming, and child bearing and rearing as *valued goals* of women underpinned by transforming the socio-structural order of Japan into one that accords to the 'gender-equal society' ideal. That is, the bio-political strategy no longer relies on the gendered contract or subjectivisation of women, but rather rests upon the emancipation of women exactly from such gendered positions.

I have recounted some legislative developments that followed the 'gender-equal society', which supported its ideal. However, the chapter has more illuminated the ways it is so far failing to deliver both in terms of amending other legislated codes of practice to accord to the 'gender-equal' principles, and ensuring that the legislated measures will be actually delivered at the street level. One serious weakness of the reforms has been located as the combination of the devolution of administrative responsibilities to the lower levels of the state bureaucracy and many of the legislated changes being introduced as the guideline for change while the central state being lenient at ensuring the street level bureaucracy to cope with the demands of progressive policies. That is, the novelty of the recent reforms is questioned in terms of the financial and organisational aptitudes of the local entities for actualising the delivery of the endorsed changes. I will revisit this issue of the novelty of reforms in chapter 8.

Lone mothers 'let loose'

One key way lone mothers benefited from the recent reforms was that their difference has become, at least in script in the state's white paper and public policy discourses, identified as one variation of lifestyles. This can be contrasted to their prior subjectivisations, keyed around a notion of the single 'mother without the male to depend on' that emphasised their differences to the socially ascribed norms of household, and motherhood. Moreover, the state policy finally finds the role for the absent father though there remains the need to clarify their role as parents rather than one that is based on their gendered traditional role. Lone mothers are also increasingly given the less stigmatic 'needs based' access to their entitlements, though it must be cautioned that 'one-body' principle about the mother and child remains as the core axiom of the key public welfare for lone mothers thus allowing lone mothers to the highly gendered subjectivity as before. Another improvement has been seen in the ways a wide aspect of lone mothers' work problems are beginning to receive the policy attention including the demand side of lone mothers' work problems – a contrasting trend to the previous approach that focused on lone mothers as the problems, and treated them as the subjects to be rehabilitated.

The key theme of precariousness that lone mothers are bearing, which the chapter came to depict involved a situation where the efforts to amend the socio-structural inequalities hardly match the unprecedented speed at which lone mothers are conceptually normalised in script and becoming deprived of support. The result has been an ironic one where lone mothers are neither afforded the promised public welfare that is 'user oriented' nor the social condition that is 'gender-equal'. Without fully delivering the legislated measures and equating the conceptual advancements made in formal discourses of the state with the actual street level realities, treating lone mothers the same as others in fact reinforces their experiences of social marginalisation, and repression. Despite the rhetoric of 'social fairness', the

policy trend of emphasising 'shared needs' at the expense of 'different needs' actually results in the socially unjust outcomes - indeed, such policy stance is reminiscent of the notion of equality as assimilation of differences that represses the different needs and perspectives of the groups subordinated in relation to those of the dominant (see chapter 2). These developments caution the risk of the equality rhetoric that has come to be endorsed together with the strong emphasis on the idea of cost-/burden-sharing in the name of 'social fairness', mirroring the persistence of the 'minimalist state' in terms of its commitment to safeguard people's welfare.

The state faces a testing time to follow through its commitment in the welfare reform and 'gender-equal society'. As the central state has gone ahead of the general ideological climate (see chapter 2) while being reticent to play a hands-on approach in the actual delivery and financing, it will be especially important to monitor the pace and balance of change at various levels and parts of the state bureaucracy and of the wider society. The next chapter offers the street level perspective of the precarious transformation by focusing on the discourses of the frontline welfare workers and lone mothers in Japan.

Chapter 5

Street level Accounts of the Japanese State Bureaucracy and Public Policies:

the state ‘in the flesh’ revealed by welfare workers and lone mothers

This chapter revisits the provision of public welfare, this time attending especially to the discourses of the street level welfare workers and lone mothers around their respective performances and experiences around the Japanese state’s public welfare. It thus offers an empirical account of ‘the state in action’, to compare to the policy discourses recounted in chapter 4. The chapter is composed of two distinctive parts reflecting the two sides to the encounter. The first part focuses on the street level workers’ discourses whereby the street level issues of state practice will be analysed, and the contradictory and contested effects of policy ambiguities overlaid onto some deep-seated problems of public welfare revealed. The likelihood that a single law or policy shift on gender equality can alter the situation will be also examined. The second part of the chapter deals with empirical accounts of applying for public welfare given by lone mothers. These provide empirical accounts of the institutional subjectivisation exercised upon lone mothers. It focuses on recounting the gendered subjectivisation of lone mothers, and how it implicates upon the sense of self and selfhood of lone mothers. But as noted earlier in the thesis, women can reflexively negotiate the practices of power and synthesise varied subjectivities. The second part of the chapter thus also observes the ways lone mothers’ responses to the practices of frontline welfare workers – it will reveal a range of strategic performances that are enacted to create an acceptable image and allow them to access their entitlements as a survival strategy.

Public welfare as experienced and delivered by the frontline welfare workers

The present part of the chapter introduces public welfare as delivered and

experienced by the street level welfare workers. As explained in chapter 3, it draws on interview data from 43 welfare workers who put into practice the delivery of key public welfare services for lone mothers (see Appendix D, F). I present these materials as both representative of diversity in the interviews but also as a window on the state as a multi-layered bureaucracy where outcomes cannot be simply ‘read off’ the formal policy discourses. The analysis here both deals with the traditional social work, and the modernised enabling services that are being delivered, in turn thus highlighting how the frontline workers are ambivalently positioned as both bearers of old and new ideologies of femininity. The chapter illuminates that the structures of work and employment among frontline welfare workers, underpinned by low resources and low regard for social work and perhaps women’s issues, can undermine the efforts to ensure the quality of recruits to match up to the challenge of delivering the ‘inappropriately funded’ progressive policies. Second, it evaluates extent a progressive law recently put into effect can change the situations of the street level public welfare, revealing both the limit and room for optimism for the ‘enabling’ welfare workers and lone mothers. The first of the chapter concludes with a summary of the street level agenda of the Japanese state in terms of its gender and welfare policies ‘in action’.

Realities of public welfare: service polarisation exposed

The present sub-part draws upon the workers’ own accounts of the service that they deliver to show the varied ways public policies are understood by different workers, and how public policies are thus both enacted and refracted at the street level of the Japanese state bureaucracy. While showing the marked polarisation in the type of service actually delivered, it also reveals the empirical accounts of what might be termed the despotic and gendered ‘traditional’ welfare work, and the enabling ‘modern’ welfare work. It also explores the causes underpinning the variability.

Some workers' interpretations of the role accorded more to the despotic traditional state, taking the disciplinary stance as a matter-of-course while subjectivising the welfare seekers as subjects to be rehabilitated. Here is one elderly worker's account of her role, marked by such traditional stance:

“My work is to lecture mothers on livelihood issues such as how to properly manage the household and approach child rearing. As a life senior (*Jinsei No Senpai*), I have plenty of life experiences. As a professional, my long years of work experience never leaves me short of knowing how to best deal with people under my guidance.” [*Section Head of the Child-Family Support Section, Local Welfare Office*]

The expressed role of guidance provision is symbolic of her continuing ascription to the traditional type of public welfare. Moreover, the emphasis put on her being the ‘life senior’ both highlights the seemingly ‘legitimate’ entry of lay agency into the public welfare practice, and the ways Japan’s social work has indeed long lacked professionalisation (see Akiyama, 1991). It is notable that her stance imposes her partial standpoint and values upon the welfare seeker as if it is impartial and universal. Moreover, what she imposes is the gendered traditional role norm – she subjectivises women as mothers and housekeepers. That is, the guidance work involves socialising or rehabilitating lone mothers into the traditional feminine roles keyed upon the domestic work and child rearing.

The same worker as above talks more of the traditional welfare work in below, which she believes is her role to deliver. Her interpretation of ‘self reliance’ illuminates a variety of notable features of the ‘old’ public welfare:

“In terms of my work, it is difficult for me to give a continuous supervision. That prevents me from providing real guidance about self reliance. The Case Worker for the Livelihood Assistance

(*Seikatsu Hogo*) can guide the household to self reliance appropriately for the growth of the child as they deal with the whole household. It is important that we provide guidance for the child of the lone mother household from an early age that they are supposed to stay and help out the mother once they grow up. I have seen cases when even eldest sons make the selfish decision to leave the household once they grow up. Whether or not the child of the lone mother household remains with the mother to become the pillar of the household after attaining employment depends on the ability of the worker in charge of the case.” [Section Head of the Child-Family Support Section, Local Welfare Office]

For one thing, her discourses reveal that by ‘self reliance’, she is actually referring to the family based welfare arrangement underpinned by the gender based roles for the family members – the self here is used to mean the household. Her guidance work for the household that ‘lacks’ the male patriarch is shown to involve getting the lone mother off public welfare via ensuring to find an alternative patriarch (to the state) - which is here identified as her child, especially if the child is a male. The role identified for the ‘eldest sons’ above is reminiscent of the patriarchal familial relations of the household members typical of the ‘*Ie*’ ideology in the now-defunct Meiji Civil Code (see chapter 4) – that is, not merely is the lingering paternalistic familial ideology written into the formal frame of references but the worker’s rationale can also rests on the defunct informal ideology. Her discourses of ‘continuous supervision’ also reveal that as a part of her ‘old’ practice is the policing work – though she is apparently unable to fully deliver this, she shows her keen interest in socialising and disciplining the child of the lone mother household to become the breadwinner male upon whom the lone mother is to depend. That is, not merely the mother but the child of a lone mother can be also assigned a devalued role.

The below interview excerpt specifically shows the devalued role assigned

to the ‘mother of the household without a male to depend on’, which is in fact the key criteria through which lone mothers are made to access their key welfare entitlements (see Appendix B):

“There are plenty of mothers who do not listen to what we tell them to do. Even though they are supposed to be lone mother households (*Boshi Katei*), they have men visiting their houses. There are cases when the mother even gets pregnant despite being supposed to be in a lone mother household. In such case, we will pursue an enquiry if the man in question can ‘claim’ (*Hikitoru*) them. It is a common-sense understanding to sort it out within the household.” [*Case Worker for Lone Mother Households, Local Welfare Office*]

The worker shows here the street level or social understanding of the ‘gender-unequal’ rationale written into the legal code around the key public welfare for lone mothers that expects lone mothers to be ‘men-free’ if they were to access entitlements – the disciplining or regulation as actually exercised is revealed. Notably, anything from getting pregnant to even having male visitors are shown to be taboos – mirroring the ambiguous definition of the *de facto* marriage as dealt in chapter 4. Moreover, the ways the worker reproaches lone mothers for having ‘men visiting their houses’ and ‘even gets pregnant’ highlight a judgement of moral worth not merely their financial needs. The welfare work involving a strong element of surveillance over their sexual conduct is rather reflective of the history of women’s bodies being defined through sexualisation under the masculinist social order and hence having to bear the weight of always being in a critical spotlight. In fact, the fieldwork found that nor is it only through formal arrangements that such surveillance is exercised but also through social surveillance in a broader sense – with workers acting upon complaints and ‘tip offs’ they apparently frequently receive from lone mothers’ neighbours that the supposedly lone mothers are ‘seeing’ men. The notion

of the man in question 'claiming' woman again reveals the paternalistic ideology persisting in the traditional welfare work, as if she is a property of the man.

The fieldwork, however, also found that the Constitutional idea of rights to welfare and media scrutiny of public work do exert a pressure for more progressive and less disciplinary practices:

"We do caution those mothers who do not stick to the rules. But reality is that we cannot be too tough with lone mother households. They have children, and we cannot risk either the children or mother dying from starvation or something by withdrawing benefits. We are strictly told from above to be careful with the human rights of lone mother households. People have better awareness of their rights, and like this in the formal leaflet, we do actually affirm the idea of rights...and you know people's suspicions about public servants these days are mushrooming. A scene of the 'civil servant bullying women and children' certainly makes a good media story." [*Case Worker for the Livelihood Assistance, Local Welfare Office*]

Thus, workers too are subjects of social surveillance whose agencies are exercised in the context of contradictory traditional and progressive values and discourses in the state and society. The above excerpt shows the way workers too bear a sense of ambivalence of their position and felt strain around it in the precariously modernising social order. It is worthy to note that the claim about 'people's suspicion toward public servants' is socially well grounded - the fraudulent conduct and mismanagement of tax money by public servants are indeed favourites of the Japanese media, especially as people are increasingly worried about the shrinking payment of national pensions.

The fieldwork also found workers who practiced enabling welfare work. Although ascribing to the modern progressive ideologies of public welfare, however, their accounts of the work revealed the social realities facing them and the recipient lone mothers that are quite far apart from the formal images of the progressive notions of public welfare policies recounted in chapter 4. For instance, here in below one worker recounts what it means and takes to be ‘user oriented’, emphasised in the recent reforms – depicted is a delivery of the bottom-line offer of help, reminiscent of the early years of social work, to literally help the welfare seeker survive the day:

“There are people who cannot be rounded up by the law alone. It is a fact that some people cannot live with a fixed income. For those people, we have to provide personally, like lending money or taking some rice for them so that they have something to eat. There are people who cannot live on the Livelihood Assistance (*Seikatsu Hogo*) alone although these cases will not be heard formally. Since the Livelihood Assistance is meant to be the last resort safety net, if they fall through this line, there is nothing else for them, if not us offering help... The legislation is all on paper but here we deal with real people and it is only expected that the printed words of laws alone are not enough to cater for people with all kinds of backgrounds and situations.” [*Case Worker for the Livelihood Assistance, Local Welfare Office*]

That is, the ‘user oriented’ welfare work here fills the gap in the programmed format of laws and the street level realities for relieving the ‘informal’ struggles of people to survive. As this worker argues that there will always be ‘people who cannot be rounded up by the law alone’, it is worthwhile remembering that the street level public welfare is inherently faced with this kind of unofficial social work – a crucial effort but one that is socially undervalued thus under-resourced. Such gap-filling work rests upon the worker’s capacity to take a *personal initiative* to recognise issues

or failures in the system, step out of the programmed format of laws, and provide for clients out of their own emotional, intellectual and even financial resources. That is, when the issues of the social investment into frontline welfare work is discussed later, it must be remembered that what is at stake is not merely the delivery of modern services but also such last resort functions that rest with the street level of public welfare.

Indeed, it is worthwhile those who have emerged as advocates for the welfare seekers have long dealt with a variety of informal work some of which in part have become formalised in recent years such as the work to deal with: the perpetrator of domestic violence while protecting the victims; debt collectors from loan-sharking who come after mothers under their protection; and lone mothers with the medically certified psychiatric disorders but also those the society does not afford any certifications yet the workers recognise as suffering from mental illness or at the 'borderline' who need extra support regardless of the social categorisation.

Another worker in below further adds insight into the challenge of offering the 'user oriented' welfare work given the realities and specific needs of different lone mothers:

“If I take one aspect of the work of assisting self reliance (*Jiritsu Shien*) such as an attainment of work, the support process involves much more than simply finding work. The first step is to help creating a condition where one is able to work. For instance, even if one is eager to go to the vocational training school, it is hard to imagine for a person who has not had even completed a compulsory education to be accepted to the school let alone finding work after leaving that school. So, we would begin our support efforts by studying with the mother for the entrance exam and also providing the in-house childcare while the mother studies.” [*Facility Manager, Privately Managed MCLAF*]

Given the varied backgrounds and needs of lone mothers, that is, the worker here again highlights the importance of capacity to be able to step out of the programmed format of laws to interpret and often deliver personally the required support. Living up the ‘user oriented’ welfare work is thus a huge commitment in terms of a variety of the inputs ranging from those of emotional, intellectual to physical that must be made to realise it – the chapter will discover later to what extent workers are socio-structurally supported to manage such challenge. The picture given above also reveals that the ‘user oriented’ considerations are still situated within a policy framework that emphasises work – more specifically, what I came to understand from the street level interviews was that the ultimate goal of public welfare even at the very progressive end still rests with a minimalist one of getting lone mothers off welfare whether through remarriage or any kinds of work. The minimalist state in terms of its commitment to safeguarding people’s welfare (see chapter 4) was hard felt at the street level, and it appeared that such was the best the workers can hope to do given the severely constrained circumstances of the street level public welfare as will be recounted later, but also due to the receiving end of social realities such as the employment situations facing lone mothers and other options available in terms of the lifestyle choice afforded.

The room for optimism was thus identified more in the process of support, than where the supported lone mothers actually end up in the end. For instance, the below excerpt illustrates the complex task of the frontline workers as enabling agents:

“I see my job is to draw out the needs of residents or assist them to recognise their own needs. It is important to maintain an atmosphere where they feel at ease about speaking on their needs. If the mother cannot express her own needs, I will approach her by saying something like ‘if you ask me to do such and such, I can do

such and such'. I might also spell out some options for her in words so to make her aware of what she might like to consider. I think it is wrong for us workers here to impose our own 'plans?' (*Sujigaki*) on residents. It is especially easy to do that on mothers who do not have their own scenarios plans. I have seen cases when mothers suddenly start expressing needs and so on, which are really the copied words of workers. That is far from a situation where that person has learnt anything useful. We need staff who can foster the opportunity for residents to formulate and express their own needs." [*Facility Manager, Privately Managed MCLAF*]

Her discourses here highlight the sensitivity required to deliver the enabling versus the despotic welfare work. In contrast to the classic social work dealt earlier where the worker dominates the process, and defines the needs of welfare seekers, the worker here emphasises empowerment through fostering lone mothers' own capacities to recognise and express their interests and needs. In fact, the worker highlights that having an awareness of and managing just such potentially dominating or culturally imperialising work position are key capacities underpinning the enabling work recounted here.

Having established that the delivery of 'user oriented' and enabling welfare work relies heavily on workers' capacities to play an enabling role not to mention their personal initiatives to engage in such role, I am ending this sub-part by recounting the work environment of the frontline welfare workers to understand the extent they are socially supported to develop such capacities, and indeed afforded to engage in such demanding role.

For one thing, I am returning to the topic of (semi-) informal work to show the extent of pressure and risk it imposes upon the workers who are engaged in such 'risky' welfare work. It is not merely the challenge of identifying 'the proper thing to do' in absence of formal instruction but also the

personal risk that they are undertaking to cater for those who fall out of the programmed formats of public welfare that cannot be underestimated. Moreover, though some special budgets may be secured to help this type of work, the fieldwork observed that this type of work is, especially, hardly said to be aptly resourced hence increasing the risk imposed upon the workers who are almost left to their own devices to handle the extremely difficult cases of welfare work. The consequences of what might be termed as the oppressive work situation are serious - for instance, in the residential hostels of the Mother-Child Livelihood Assistance Facilities, that allowed the admission of lone mothers who have mental problems, it emerged that the development of psychological problems among workers is in commonplace. In one facility, the manager reported a continuous need to find new staff due to the high incidences of breakdowns suffered by the workers. The survival strategy of workers involved personally purchasing different kinds of insurance to cover the various risks to which they are exposed at work. Many felt the availability of professional counselors, and in-house lawyers as the dire necessity to deal with their work in the legislatively grey zone. Without appropriate investments injected to the work of the frontline workers who either willingly or out of choice fill-in the legal pitfalls, workers who play the 'gap filling' role continue to do so at personal risk.

The work environment of the interviewed frontline workers was indeed hardly said to be well-supported, protected or regulated - one that cannot be treated monolithically with the popular media image of the arbitrary 'big spender' state that drains the tax money for the own good. The killing of a municipal worker by a Livelihood Assistance (*Seikatsu Hogo*) claimant and the related calls for the reconsideration of the crisis management capacity (Mainichi Shinbun, morning edition, 21/05/05) is one crude incidence that illuminates the extent of risk involved in the gate-keeping work. Such incidence suggests that the frontline workers are not merely the agents of the state who deliver but they may be more appropriately seen as the

scapegoat of the 'minimalist' central state who are subjected to bear *personally* people's resentments toward the various shortcomings of the Japanese state. That is, at an opposite end to the image of the over-powerful state agents, it may be seen that the workers themselves are struggling to serve both state and people that is having to make contradictory ends meet and deal with role tensions while also having to self manage their personal safety.

Let alone the need for lawyers and counselors, in fact, the fieldwork observed that workers suffer from resource constraints of very basic sorts. Several Mother-Child Advisors (*Boshi Sodan In*) claimed that they routinely miss breaks to cope with the overload of cases. For instance, at one Mother-Child Livelihood Assistance Facility, staffs faced having to do two night shifts a week due to staff shortages. That is, for some, the reality is such that not merely are they unsupported in a sense of playing the specialised functions but also in a more basic sense of not having enough breaks and even sleep. The short staffing situation has emerged as a significant issue not merely because of the time pressure and fatigue that it causes *per se* but also as it makes it difficult for workers to make use of learning opportunities through participation in workshops and training programmes. Such missed opportunities a matter of concern, especially given the ways street level public welfare is mainly staffed by the general administrators who are not necessarily qualified welfare professionals. Moreover, given that the central Japanese state has gone ahead of public attitudes to endorse the progressive policies in recent years (see chapter 2), educating frontline workers is of a critical importance in the actual delivery of the promised modernisation of public welfare.

In terms of the underpinning cause of the under-resourced work environment, several workers offered views about their work positions to reveal further insights around the 'minimalist state'. The worker below, talks of the marginalisation of welfare work within the state bureaucracy,

and some welfare positions being the ‘dead-end’:

“Some people would say being allocated to work in the facility is a demotion transfer (*Sasen*). The positions to deal with public assistance and public welfare for lone mother households are hardly the popular work positions to be placed in for civil servants. In fact, you find that the facility manager positions are sometimes treated as seats to be sat on for a while before the retirement.”
[*Facility Manager, State-Managed MCLAF*]

That is, the worker’s insider view of the bureaucracy suggests that there is an element that the organisational culture is such that some welfare positions that are engaged with the welfare delivery for lone mother households are not ones of the valued or respected, perhaps mirroring low regard for social work and women’s issues. I have in fact encountered a facility manager whom I observed to be merely waiting for his retirement. That is, despite being the work post that serves people whose welfare and even survival are closely tied to the service, there is a tendency to attract the older and disinterested workers. At the risk of over-privileging the young and the non-governmental, the fieldwork has observed that the re-education is especially a critical issue with the elderly civil servants who have entered public work as the general administrators, and long worked under the old despotic regime that readily delivered bureaucratic and gender-imbued public welfare. It is not to say the field is dominated by older generalists – rather my emphasis is on especially ensuring to inject appropriate social investment to ‘update’ the older generalists who can readily bring in the old legacies in the welfare delivery both through utilising their lay agencies and acting upon the traditional frames of formal references as shown earlier in the chapter.

The same worker as above offered more thoughts on the human resource issue as follows, illuminating the limit of the outmoded human resource

practice of the state in terms of securing the worker quality:

“The staff rotation of the general administrators (*Jimuya*) may be good in a sense that civil servants can develop a broad knowledge but I think it is now dated. If you look at the quality of service being offered in facilities managed privately, you see the difference. People there have chosen to take up the welfare work as a lifework, and specifically trained for that.” [*Facility Manager, State-Managed MCLAF*]

That is, while investing in the frontline workers is an important issue to be dealt, another way to tackle the problem is to re-evaluate the structural organisation in itself - commissioning the welfare work from the non-governmental specialist organisations or directly employing the specialists in welfare positions at local offices as already practiced in some offices may be a ‘good practice’ that ought to be replicated.

Having recounted the ways enabling effects heavily relies on informal and personal initiatives of progressive workers who are hardly aptly supported – that is, progressive welfare effects depend as much on human resource issues as on the formal laws enacted. The next sub-part follows a detailed case around one law – it examines evaluates the dissemination of a progressive law, recently enacted as a part of the ‘gender-equal society’ initiative, in terms of the extent it can help the workers who seek to play an enabling role.

Possibilities and limits of a progressive law

The present section examines the extent one progressive law, namely the 2001 Law for the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims (*Haigusha Kara No Boryoku Boshi Oyobi Higaisha Hogo Ni Kansuru Horitsu*) (hereafter referred to as the DV law) may change the

constrained situation of the enabling workers at the street level, and indeed the service actually delivered.

For one thing, it might be usefully reminded that the workers who practiced enabling welfare work felt that the so-called progressive law is only catching up with the work that they have always dealt with in absence of the formal arrangements. The workers nonetheless welcomed the endorsement of the DV law on the following accounts for instance:

“Previously, once the police found that a woman on the run was in our facility, they would ask us to bring her out to talk to the husband. They would not understand the kind of the state someone in her shoes was in. It was difficult to get an understanding from the police back then. To begin with, having a name to call the problem as ‘DV’ and being able to use it in communication with other workers are milestone changes. The ways police treats that issue have considerably changed. For instance, there was one resident of this facility who actually went missing. She had come to this place because of DV. I sought advice from the police if I should report her as a missing person. The police immediately responded that it is a case related to DV thus they have to seek advice from the department that specialises in DV. There has been an amazing turn in the way the police approaches DV.” [*Facility Manager, Privately Managed MCLAF*]

What emerges from the worker’s empirical account of the law is that it has had the effect of curtailing inter-agency conflict. In fact, two Mother-Child Advisors in different local welfare offices also reported of the emergence of a more accommodating stance among their colleagues in dealing with lone mother clients whose cases involve the suspected cases of DV. One of the Mother-Child Advisors offered that her colleagues who deliver the Child Rearing Allowance (*Jidō Fuyō Teate*) and Child Rearing Benefit (*Jido*

Ikusei Teate) who had never before ‘bent the rules’ even with the best of her efforts became more willing to make discretionary decisions to help out the DV victims. The change is not merely the cultural revolution of workers but also the emergence of the viable social label to use in communication with colleagues, a vital tool to work around DV that the worker has previously lacked. The law here is illuminated to be a resource and tool for workers to legitimate what they might have done without it. The implicated better inter-agency collaboration and the concurrent enhancement in the resource capacity is a significant one, especially given the reluctance on the part of the central Japanese state to properly resource policies (see chapter 4). Though proper financing is an important issue, attending to the ways the state bureaucracy is composed of numerous agencies that do not necessarily operate together efficiently is still one way to improve the function of the state without having to rely on heavy financing.

A worker has also noticed that the DV suffers also shared the enabling experience underpinned by the positive ‘labeling effects’:

“The change I see is that women who come here for DV are now able to say that they have ‘come here to get away from DV’. Previously, even a woman with a collapsed skull would tell me that it was her fault that all this happened. DV suffering women were reluctant to tell people that they were running away from abusive husbands, who are fathers of their own children. They would deny their sufferings because they thought their situations were something very embarrassing. Nowadays, I find it delightful that the self-perceptions about their sufferings in themselves have changed. They tend to feel that they do not have to keep their sufferings in secret. Little by little, they are able to talk about it. The topic has become something that is ok to be divulged to others.” [*Facility Manager, Privately Managed MCLAF*]

For one thing, the gender violence recounted here was previously hidden in private and suffered by women in silence – the workers suggest it is only now women are given the voice to express about the gender violence in public. As with the worker's account shown earlier, the interview excerpt here highlights the significance of labeling as a power category – now not merely the attainment of social name for their sufferings but also with the normalised label, it is shown that the ways the DV sufferers experience the problem have also changed.

For those who have always dealt with DV, however, the cultural change that has taken place has felt to be of the limited sort – one worker takes account of it as follows:

“It is good that there have been public campaigns but I do not see much improvement in the understanding in the fundamental part. Separating the sufferer from the perpetrator is not an ultimate or almighty solution although such approach appears to be the common one that workers tend to jump on. The importance of the long-term support process that we offer to the sufferer here is typically unrecognised by public nurses and colleagues in the main welfare office.” [*Facility Manager, Privately Managed MCLAF*]

The worker here has been taking personal initiative to attend relevant seminars and get involved in the self-help groups to develop insights of the issues around DV – with these, she recognised the importance of fostering the rehabilitation programmes both for the perpetrator and victim of violence, which are yet to have a more than marginal presence in Japan. As a specialist thus she has experienced that the law has brought the polarised knowledge one step closer between that of the mainstream and of those at the other specialised end but the cultural change attained so far is still at an elementary level that is far from adequate. That is, it illuminates that the ambivalence in the cultural frame of references is far from eliminated, and

in turn variability of the service quality remains. Though there has been progress in narrowing the polarisation, there still exists sizeable gap in the service delivered by those who do and can take personal initiative to deliver the progressive welfare service, and those whose behavioural patterns accord more to the cultural and structural standards at the other end.

The fieldwork in fact observed that one end of the spectrum some facilities struggled to reflect upon any interpretations of the law:

“Unfortunately, we can only take in the cases that can be guided towards self reliant living with a minimum assistance that we can offer to the residents here. We have mothers here who are waiting to get places in public housing, nursery or find employment...only the simple cases. We do not even have a staff on duty at night. We do not have much choice but to select relatively unproblematic applicants who are able to get by without much help.” [*Facility Manager, State-Managed MCLAF*]

That is, the informal role coping strategy is revealed whereby the in-take of cases is managed according to the structural realities facing the worker. The facility managers of the two state-managed MCLAF claimed frankly that their engagements in such practices are due to the under-resourced policy. Such street level realities show that the law is not necessarily put into effect locally hence people not only fall through the gaps in the law itself but also its adoption, affirming how the formal discourses of the state cannot be taken at the face value. At the risk of generalisation, it emerged that the capacity to deal with the socio-structural constraints in terms of financing and staffing differed depending on the management-type of the welfare facilities. The interviewed workers typically shared a view that the non-state managed MCLAF is better both at managing the resource and delivering specialised services while ones of the state being less able to overcome the unfavourable socio-structural circumstances partly it appeared due to the

difference in the management flexibility. Notably, one facility manager of the state-managed MCLAF himself has led a campaign to privatise the facility in an attempt to find better services for the residents.

The workers' discourses around a specific DV-related measure called the wide-area coordinative system (*Koiki Sochi*) similarly revealed the refraction of the under-resourced policy at the street level of the state bureaucracy. Although being a progressive measure that has come into effect with the 2002 amendments to the Social Welfare Law (*Shakai Fukushi Ho*) whereby the DV-suffering women have supposedly become entitled to apply for any of the MCLAFs nationwide regardless of the current address of the residence none of the local authorities under which interviewees have worked have had implemented the law-endorsed change due to a basic structural impediment:

“There exists a fundamental issue about the lack of ‘shelter’ capacity. We have only two rooms reserved here for that purpose. Even if we were to be allowed to admit the emergency cases of mothers from elsewhere, we could not accommodate them if there were no shelter rooms available. Recently, we have been receiving up to 50 enquiries annually about our facility for the emergency-temporary protection (*Kinkyu Ichiji Hogo*) but we have only accepted a few cases since we did not have room vacancies. After all, I presume the government is reluctant to throw in the tax money to MCLAF that probably accommodates less than 1 percent of all households. We cannot expect much government attention because of that. The idea of *Koiki Sochi* is all well but it is no consolation to the prospective users that we are playing with an absolutely minimum number of such facility.” [*Facility Manager, Privately Managed MCLAF*]

Again, the role tension, that is, being legally ascribed to deliver yet not

afforded do so is revealed – the change in legislation *per se* has been far from sufficient to produce any real results. The lack of appropriate investment or the facilitative effort in improving the structural capacity has meant that the street level public welfare is not able to act upon the discursive and legal advances made. In fact, such lack of proper financial backing of progressive measures is an especially serious issue for the management of the MCLAFs on an account that the facility market is least ‘market-oriented’ – one facility manager has offered that in contrast to the situation facing the daycare centers for infants where demand is sizeable and supply is expanding, the facility demand is *relatively* small as expressed above and the supply minimal. That is, in absence of the competitive pressure and without the proper resourcing of new market-oriented measures on the part of the state, it is anticipated that this echelon of public welfare is especially at risk in being left behind by modernisation elsewhere.

As shown earlier, however, the inadequacy in the formal arrangements does not necessarily mean that claimants are completely left to their own devices – informal help or ‘under-the-table’ arrangements exist, though haphazardly, to relieve the needs that fall through formal arrangements. For instance, one worker revealed the ways she makes unofficial arrangements to legitimise the handling of cases by using local addresses such as the police station, the guest-house and even the welfare office as the recorded address of the non-resident subjects in need of emergency protection. Other informal arrangements, which some interviewed workers have practiced long before the formal enforcement of the wide-area coordinative system (*Koiki Sochi*), involve: 1) facilitating the acceptance of a locally resident mother by the MCLAF in other regions by offering to bear the cost of the facility usage; 2) releasing the resident mother to the MCLAF of other administrative areas but facilitating the continuous payment of the Livelihood Assistance (*Seikatsu Hogo*) by the local authority of the original place of the mother’s residence; and 3) making voluntary agreements with private shelter facilities elsewhere that involve paying for the service and finding the permanent

places of residence for the subject mothers who require emergency-temporal protection.

Policy reflections: street level agenda

The chapter began by recounting the polarisation in the actual public welfare service being delivered at the street level of the state bureaucracy. In contradiction to the formal image of public welfare underpinned by the progressive public policy discourses earlier recounted in chapter 4, the present chapter revealed the ongoing despotic and gendered traditional public welfare being delivered by some frontline workers. However, it was also with the analysis of enabling welfare work through which the disenchantment of Japan emerged – especially, even at the progressive end of public welfare delivery, the social realities had meant that even the enabling workers had to reconcile to accept that in the end, it is mostly through marriage that the lone mothers will leave the public welfare facility.

It also recounted vital welfare work both formal and informal being delivered at the street level of the Japanese state bureaucracy. The themes of rescuing the lives of those who fall off the programmed formats of the laws, and interpreting the progressive laws to ones that are meaningful to the recipient lone mothers who come with the varied needs and interests should be reminded here. However, both such critical efforts around a variety of informal work and the actual delivery of progressive policies relied on personal initiatives and capacities of the frontline workers who worked in the severely resource constrained circumstances. In turn, the current situation of over-reliance on individual initiatives to deliver the progressive and enabling welfare work allowed the randomness or rather unpredictability of the service content and quality being dispatched at the street level of public welfare.

That is, the contradictory cultural standards deep-seated in the formal legal

framework (see chapter 4) are not the only factor that underpins the polarised welfare service that is being delivered. Especially with the time pressure and the fatigue that the frontline workers are exposed, the Japanese state is hardly said to be offering a work environment that allows the workers to learn new values and skills required in modernising public welfare as formally endorsed. In addition to such poorly resourced general condition of work environment, the frontline workers were also put at cusp by the ways progressive policies were not being resourced – causing role tensions to be born by the frontline workers who may be eager to implement the ‘user oriented’ services yet not being structurally supported to do so. The marginalisation of social work revealed, especially at this time when progressive public policy discourses are flourishing, is an important social issue to be highlighted, and politicised.

The critical reflection around the DV law revealed that a progressive law is welcomed, and it is an important resource and tool for the street level workers – the positive labeling effect, especially in terms of the way it allowed better inter-agency collaboration was a notable insight. Although afar from eliminating the polarisation, the state being the multi-layered agencies versus the monolithic bloc, it showed one way to improve the capacity to deliver without relying on heavy financing. The next I will recount the encounter ‘in the flesh’ of the resisting despotic state from the recipient lone mothers’ end.

Encounter ‘in the flesh’: lone mothers’ experiences with the traditional state

The second part of the chapter draws on lone mothers’ discourses around their experiences with public welfare at the street level of the Japanese state bureaucracy. More specifically, at the risk of downplaying the significance of the modern enabling aspects of public welfare, it focuses on uncovering lone mothers’ experiences with the despotic and gender-imbued traditional

welfare practices. My intention with this focus is to recount how these practices earlier recounted are experienced and responded by the recipient lone mothers – I will both highlight the welfare risks born hence the urgency to resolve the policy implications outlined previously, and also lone mothers' agencies to negotiate the practices of power through which I will end up revealing somewhat distressing sight of doing lone motherhood in Japan. It must be cautioned that except for the voices dealt in the first section, experiences with public welfare reported here are not ones that strictly relate to the welfare delivery in the recent reform era - that is, the consideration here should be read more as a means to gain insights of the ways traditional type of the welfare work affect lone mothers rather than as a direct means to verify the progress of the recent modernisation efforts. First, it recounts the identification of the 'state centred' welfare delivery by lone mothers that contrasts with the highly publicised 'user oriented' service. Second, the policing work of the state as experienced by lone mothers is recounted, especially attending to the particular ways lone mothers are subjectivised. Third, lone mothers' responses to the particular subjectivisations are dealt – here, it uncovers the ways lone mothers' creative agencies are mobilised to deal strategically with the street level and gendered issues around the access to entitlements. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of lone mothers' encounter with the state 'in the flesh'.

'State centred' welfare delivery

This sub-part focuses on recounting the logistical access or 'hurdles' to their entitlements – in a sharp contrast to the modernised language around public welfare dealt in chapter 4, it reveals the deep-seated assumptions about the deviant role ascribed to welfare consumers and women. What I am highlighting here are the lingering traditional structures of public welfare at the street level that inhibit lone mothers from gaining access to welfare entitlements regardless of whether or not they are dealt by sympathetic

workers who might be aspired to deliver the enabling welfare work. At the risk of downplaying the various identities and multiplicity of the self of lone mothers, the illustration here is keyed around the gap in realities experienced by lone mothers especially *as workers* and those assumed in structures of public welfare - the particular choice reflects the aim of uncovering the unfilled needs of lone mothers as breadwinner workers that may be considered as a part of the active labour market policies, which are increasingly the state's key 'solution' for lone mothers (see chapter 4).

For one thing, lone mother claimants are assumed to be available and flexible while as working mothers, most of them have found themselves living a life that affords little time or flexibility. For instance, the anchored complaints involved the ways the street level public welfare makes no concerted efforts in making the information about public welfare available to lone mothers in need. Some lone mothers specifically spoke of a practice of delivering pieces of information only upon requests thus in effect allowing lone mothers to miss out on various available services unless they have already done the research and know of exactly what to ask. Such ways of information delivery ignores the ways most lone mothers live under severely constrained circumstances as the sole child rearer and worker.

In terms of the information content being delivered also, one lone mother noted a specific instance of being abruptly introduced to a new piece of information about the quota with regard to the use of the child minding service, upon which she has relied to juggle multiple roles. Having already used up the quota, she felt the immediate pressure to be a 'super-woman' who would not fall sick while earning and having to shuffle her children around - she argued that for lone mothers who are juggling various roles of earning, caring and other home-making duties alone *with limited resources*, being given partial information at the start of the service in this way can mean an immediate livelihood hardship affecting both the mother and child. That is, such way of service provision in turn assumes flexible mother *and*

children, which is conflictive with the lived realities.

The opening hours of the local welfare office that coincides with the typical office hours has also attracted attention of many lone mothers - a symbolic mark of the 'state centredness' in the delivery of public welfare. The significance of this is heightened by the ways many lone mothers have found that they are required to submit application documents in person rather than by post, and to visit the office 'more than necessary', according to several lone mothers, due to the lack of coordination among different sections of the welfare office, and between the central and municipal authorities. More specifically, it has been said that various services available to lone mother households require similar documents but multiple applications, and the differing dates for (the renewal of) applications for different services necessitate the claimant spending days in applying. The significance of such procedural inconveniences for lone mothers as peripheral is worthy of attention. Such delivery structures ignore their social realities whereby missing a day at work may not only mean a loss of the day's worth of income but also potential dismissal from work given the insecure nature of employment to which they are typically exposed.

In fact, the requirement of having to make multiple visits to the local welfare office is also a significant issue in light of the dual realities of the state as the enabler but also policing agent. The multiple visit requirements are a matter of concern given lone mothers' torments of being policed or put under surveillance as will be recounted in the following sub-part. This aspect of the state is implicated in polarised views over the effects of physical proximity to the welfare office and the 'volunteers' who work for the state in one's neighbourhoods, the so-called the Local Welfare Commissioner (*Minsei In*) – on one hand some lone mothers have focused on practicality and preferred to have them close to the place of their residence, others preferred less proximate sites to help conceal their identities as lone mothers in everyday interactions in the immediate

neighbourhood.

Finally, several lone mothers raised concerns over the constrained access to public welfare that is underpinned by the inappropriate policy structure. Notably, they are working lone mothers who felt 'penalised for working' as training courses on offer typically target non-working lone mothers to become employable. A need was expressed for welfare programmes that address not merely low skills but also support upskilling to improve their 'career prospects' at all levels - that is, these lone mothers highlighted the low expectations of the state and the appropriate policy focus rested on the 'viable work', not any work. While paid work is intended to be a liberating experience especially in an emotional term, the dominant notion of paid work for many lone mothers has also involved the struggle to make enough earning at the lower end of the labour market. These realities of and needs around paid work felt by lone mothers are important reference points to critically reflect upon the policy structures that are historically underpinned by the policy emphasis on 'self reliance through work' (if not men), and the renewed emphasis on labour market measures in recent years (see chapter 4).

Having briefly dealt with lone mothers' encounter with the 'state centred' welfare delivery, one in opposition to the formally endorsed 'user oriented' public welfare of recent years, it will now deal more with lone mothers' encounter with the traditional state, specifically focusing this time on their experiences around the policing work practice of the traditional state.

Policing: gendered subjectivisations and the imposition of deviant roles

Earlier, the chapter has recounted the work of frontline workers that involves surveillance, policing of conducts and gender loaded disciplining. These are now dealt from the 'other side' of the encounter, namely from the perspective of lone mothers at the receiving end. It will uncover certain

subjectivisations of lone mothers and the silenced voices under the state regulation or more generally how lone mothers have experienced them, leaving to deal with lone mothers' agencies exercised against the structure and various agencies of public welfare in the following section. The cases dealt here will illuminate how the institutional subjectivisations recounted affect different lone mothers who are at the varied crossroads in life.

Earlier in the present chapter, I have illustrated the ways some frontline workers have taken their dominating work positions for granted, and also exercised lay agencies – here is the mirror image of such practice, this time recounted from the receiving end:

“The advisor began lecturing me about appropriate morals for receiving the assistance...as if it were the merciful means of assistance, and if the money was coming out of his pocket. He was saying things like ‘do you have something to challenge about when you are being given the money?’. I was reminded of how I should be grateful about it. ... He already had certain ideas about me before hearing my stories. ... He was certainly not about to listen but rather eager to preach. He had no doubt about his superiority (*Erai Hito*), and my inferiority (*Ottoteiru Mono*). The whole thing was condescending but I was not able to do anything then.” [LM 15]

The depicted theme involves the worker who acts as a ‘moral guardian’ and the lone mother who is subjectivised as the inferior or subordinate, a less of a citizen with rights for welfare who is the needy claimant for public welfare with the ‘last resort’ and merciful or voluntary compassions connotations. Moreover, it reveals her reservation over the way the worker has treated public welfare ‘as if it were the merciful means of assistance’, and as if it were delivered at his own expense, and indeed the associated experience of being dominated by the worker in the meeting. The most notable theme

depicted above nonetheless is the way the lone mother has found that she 'was not able to do anything' about her feeling of being unjustly treated – as in the notion of the 'cultural imperialism' (see chapter 2), she finds it unable to express her viewpoint and in result let the privileged to impose his views upon her thus allowing the false universalisation of his partial account of social realities. The factors that underpin such silenced voices will be uncovered later.

The lone mothers also talked about being imposed of the gendered position – the below excerpt shows the policing work of disciplining women to kept o certain type of feminine subject:

"The advisor told me things like, 'do not even think about divorcing him and coming for public welfare. Your case is better than the average'. She was telling me, 'he provides for the family with the regular income and there is no incidence of domestic violence. He sounds like a decent guy. What is the problem?'. I was even told that 'there are others who are more pitiful and desperate than you are' and so that I should try harder and put up with it. ... She keenly reminded that as a woman, I have all the happiness I can expect and I should be happy with it." [LM 47]

The worker draws on the comparative tales of hardship to establish the deserving and undeserving poor, again treating public as if it were the 'last resort' and compassionate means of welfare support and public welfare was for the most desperate while it was expected that people would manage the most welfare issues within the household (see chapter 4). It also shows again the worker's engagement in playing the role of a moral guardian – one that is rather reminiscent of the old time when the national project explicitly promoted the gender based roles (see chapter 2). Most interesting theme here is a picture of 'woman disciplining woman' to ascribe to the gender based role – that is, here depicted is the practice of an 'ordinary' woman

who does not question the gender order and has successfully pursued female investment in masculinist hierarchy to earn certain status and rank. As a loyal agent of the fratriarchal state, the worker subjectivises the lone mother as woman as the subordinate other hence the assumed acceptance of inferior role and expectation. Indeed, 'the proper thing to do' identified is to remain as the dependant, and the imposed gendered position assumes women to bear the minimal welfare condition, which is exemplified in the benchmark highlighted that rests around the issues of domestic violence and the regular maintenance. The social anticipation placed upon women to bear the minimal welfare condition associated with the gendered position and moreover accept it as a self fulfilling experience mirrors the social anticipation around motherhood dealt in chapter 2.

The interview excerpt below reveals further account of the gender loaded discipline recounted for by a lone mother – this time, the case involving the experience of being subjectivised as a mother of a younger generation:

“When I consulted about the possibility of receiving the welfare benefit, the advisor began talking about her personal life difficulties, saying things like ‘my livelihood is no easier than yours’ and ‘I am nearly retired and I can tell you that you have to learn to lead a frugal life otherwise it will be difficult to get by in your old age’. She went on condemning me by saying ‘why do you, young people divorce so easily? You know, you are so spoilt and selfish... If you have to receive public welfare, then you should not divorce. Women of my time endured so much more...especially if you already have children with him’. ... She was telling me that I should be shameful as a mother, and complaining how the society nowadays lacks orderliness while grumbling that it is a matter-of-course that mothers put up with things for the sake of children.” [LM 23]

That is, as in the previous case, a comparative tales of hardship is drawn upon to limit the access to entitlements, and the claimant is disciplined on what is expected of a woman – the worker assumes ‘the proper thing to do’ for women is to stay in the marriage, especially if she were to claim public welfare once divorced thus in effect rejecting her citizenry rights for welfare. Moreover, it is shown that the worker acts upon the social norm of motherhood, and discipline the lone mother to self sacrifice. Again, it is worth remembering that the worker’s gender-loaded practice cannot be blamed wholly on the personal whim of workers given the formal legal framework fosters such subjectivisation – for instance, the ‘one-body’ principle of the mother and child still firmly remains as a core axiom of the welfare provision for lone mothers (see chapter 4). Further, the interview excerpt again depicts a theme of the ‘norm ascribing woman policing other women’ – this time with a particular feature of woman belonging to the older age cohort engaging in the disciplining of a younger woman who seeks to make a different life choice. The next chapter will discover the socio-structural background of the conflict between the groups of women who make different life choices and lone mothers’ experiences and understandings of such social surveillance in the context of everyday living.

Finally, the present section ends with further insights of being subjectivised as a mother via a story of a lone mother who suffered infant-care neurosis (*Ikuji Noirōze*) - her case reveals some of the serious welfare risks of the popular maternal culture that readily demonises mothers (see chapter 2), which the welfare seeking lone mothers can be subjected to bear:

“I could not consult the problems I had with my children. It is assumed that the mother naturally loves the child and enjoys caring for them. It is taboo to come out and say that I as a mother actually do not like my children and find it difficult to care for them. Even when I voiced out my complaints (in encounter with public welfare workers) such as that I find it difficult to enjoy caring for my

children as a slip of the tongue, no one ever showed empathy.”
[LM 38]

Indeed, it reveals how women can experience the difficulty of embodying a maternal body or ‘doing motherhood’ in the culture that predominantly assumes motherhood as in the popular celebrated notion to be the ‘natural’ role and ultimate desire of women thus a happy experience (see chapter 2). More specifically, it highlights her sufferings over the gap in the social expectation and the realities experienced, and indeed the ways she has experienced the state as unwilling to recognise and cater for her such sufferings – that is, again, it shows a lone mother’s experience of difficulty in having her view of realities heard in encounter with public welfare.

In fact, she has had both the implicit and explicit experiences of being disciplined to remain as the role conforming ‘good mother’:

“In reaction to my problems with my own children, the Public Health Nurse (*Hokenfu*) said ‘surely you gave birth from your own choice’. ... Leaving aside my case, I would say the chance of getting pregnant without really deciding is there for anyone if you are women. ... Even when I sought help from the Home Helper Service to relieve myself from the stress of looking after my children while working, I was again looked coldly upon (*Shiroi Me De Mirareru*) and told ‘why do you not look after your own children?’. ... I felt the worker at the counter for the Livelihood Assistance (*Seikatsu Hogo*) treated me like the utter deviant (*Dame Na Ningen*). Throughout my contact with public welfare, I felt being condemned as a ‘loose woman’ (*Fushidara Na Onna*). I feel they deal with us as if ‘the lone mother household equals the non-human beings’ (*Boshi Katei Wa Ningen Jya Nai Mitai Na*).”
[LM 38]

It reveals additional insights around the powerful ways the lone mother has experienced being silenced in encounter with public welfare. As a part of this, the lone mother's perception of pregnancy highlights the gap in realities of doing womanhood and the social expectation around femininity that is policed by the welfare workers mentioned above. Her experiences of being treated as the 'utter deviant', 'loose woman', and even 'less of a human' mirror the effect of the powerful stigma attached due to the 'double deviance' – that is, not merely being outside the norms of parenthood but also femininity. Moreover, here again, it reveals the resentment over the ways her experienced difficulty of doing motherhood is in numerous times not merely stamped out as inappropriate but also treated as a mark of her personality flaw rather than as a legitimate subject of social concern – which is in a sharp contrast to the formal recognition of the infant-care neurosis as a socially fostered illness in the white paper discourses (see chapter 2). It is also worthy to note here that the gendered way she has experienced the access to the domestic service highlights that an introduction of a conceptually progressive service *per se* is not an adequate change - a confirming tale around the ambivalent modernisation of public welfare as already dealt.

The welfare risk that is caused by such mistreatments is one that cannot be under-estimated:

“I feel being cornered to the edge. I get so frustrated about mistreatments. They fuel my dislike of child rearing. ... I try so hard to make things to be better but it makes me think that may be I should resign myself from everything...quit working, stay at home, shoulder everything by myself and get cut off from everything. ... It is depressing, no fun at all. It heightens my temptation to bully children...” [LM 38]

That is, with the various stigmatising experiences, her suffering around

motherhood are led to be privatised and depoliticised. In terms of the welfare implication upon this lone mother, it is revealed that she has felt being cornered to surrender herself to despair - feeling powerless, she expresses the anguished feeling over the 'involuntary' social retreat that she is having to make. Such outcome is reminiscent of the constrained bodily space allowed for female body or the notion of 'taking up little space' (Foucault, 1998), a social trend that is associated with the total sexualisation of female body and the related intense social surveillance over it - or in fact, the magnified version of such sanction applied to the lone mother as the violator of the norms of femininity. It is also highlighted that her illness of the infant-care neurosis is inflamed thus heightening the welfare risk born not merely by the mother herself but also her children - that is, here depicted is the irony of the social responses to the good mothering practices.

The next section illuminates the active ways lone mothers may deal with such institutional practices of power to succeed in accessing their entitlements - though at the expense of allowing, to some extents, to be culturally imperialised.

Negotiating the access to entitlements: working around the structure, workers, and the female body

Having uncovered the various structural and 'intangible' issues around the access to entitlements, the present section deals with lone mothers' 'active' responses to such street level realities that cannot be readily conceived from the formal discourses of the state in recent years. It depicts lone mothers' experiences of acting upon the recognition that the reliance on the self identification as a citizen with equal rights *per se*, however just it may be, is not a 'street-wise' option or rather a good enough strategy to maintain living. More specifically, it recounts the survival strategies practiced by lone mothers to negotiate the access to entitlements that involve: gaining workers' acceptance via entering the self into an 'audition' whereby the lone

mother role-plays the desirable images; placing pressure on workers via putting on a 'mini-demonstration'; and counteracting the socially disadvantaged position via mobilising other privileged bodies as representatives. An issue around engulfment in devalued roles is also dealt to highlight the limits of the individual creative agency in dealing with the street level realities of public welfare.

Earlier, it has been highlighted that despite the feeling of resentment towards what it appears to be the unjust treatments, that feeling is not necessarily acted upon. In fact, the behavioural choice has involved not merely remaining silent but also a *strategic presentation* of forged identities or conveying the desired images. Here, given the sense of giving a performance rather than being 'engulfed' in or internalising the assumed role and playing on the whim of the worker the notion of claimants 'auditioning' (see Rees, 1979) for the entitlement is a powerful way of understanding the particular process of accessing entitlements. That is, as in the dramaturgic analysis of Goffman dealt in chapter 2, the self shown below engages in a strategic performance of the self in response to the particularity of the circumstances ultimately to be accepted and 'win' access to entitlements. Here, one lone mother tells of her account around performing as desired:

"It may be that we have rights for entitlements and the rest but you cannot get by speaking only fine words. You can talk about rights and all, make complaints but to be frank, you cannot afford to go through such hassles when you desperately need the service... Out of question in times when you are wondering how to live tomorrow. It may be degrading but you need to win over the worker dealing with your case. I am not joking but as you would do so in the family court, you want to look conservative (*Hikaeme*). It is better to look pitiful, and remain polite and grateful however the worker may treat you. Last thing you want to be is to appear as

‘men’s enemy’. ... It is better if you appear to be a victim in all this, like having to have divorced upon suffering from domestic violence. You would not want to appear as challenging them, appearing to be a threat for men. The aged female workers would be the same as men, if not worse - really, like a notion that ‘women’s enemies are women’ (*Onna No Teki Wa Onna*). Appearing to be the respected...as in the notion of ‘good wife, wise mother’ (*Rōsai Kenbo*) is always a safe bet. You do not want to appear as a woman but a mother (*Onna Ja Nakute Hahaokya*), working hard to raise children. No earrings, hair tied at the back, no colourful clothing. Yes, like in the drama... You want to come across as shabby and pitiful.” [Lm 13]

That is, it is the survival notion that underpins the lone mother’s rationalities of putting the self into ‘the audition’ involving the strategic performance of the self – she indeed reveals that claiming rights for entitlements as in a sense of a *de jure* citizen is something of a romantic dream. The hard-pressed reality that is experienced is one of the survival, requiring her to accept the ‘degrading’ feeling and be focused on quickly working around the system encountered at the street level. Notably, in fact, the fieldwork did find two lone mothers who had actually refused to even access their welfare entitlements on a basis of understanding that entitlements available for lone mothers in the current form assume gender-ascribed roles hence the conflict with their identities as citizens with rights to welfare in a sense of equal individual citizens. However, such cases have emerged to be more of the exception. Holding onto and acting strictly upon the self identity as a citizen with rights is not a choice available to anyone – two other lone mothers have indeed used public welfare to manage the livelihood despite sharing such critical account on the gendered access, and explicitly argued that it is not viable choice to wave their rights unless the gender inequalities in society especially in the employment market are eliminated so that they have an alternative channel to earn other than public welfare to maintain

their livelihoods.

Her discourses also reveal the 'conveyed images' that mirror the earlier considerations around the subjectivisations of lone mother claimants and the anticipated roles to play as the good claimant, woman, and mother – that is, the depicted involves the strategic presentation of the self and bodily conducts for gaining 'acceptance' (see Goffman, 1963) by the worker seen here as the gate-keeper. For instance, she mentions about the rule of looking grateful and desperate or downcast, which accords to the expectation placed upon the claimant for public welfare when that is taken to be the 'last resort' and merciful means of assistance. Also, as for the gendered position considered earlier, it is shown that she negotiates via conveying divorce as inevitable, and looking to be the victim rather than as the 'men's enemy' who is willingly stepping out of 'her place' and challenging the gendered subordinated position ascribed to women. That is, the strategy involves accepting the masculinist social hierarchy, the domination of men over women being the key part of this, and frame the claim for entitlements as an act of seeking fratriarchal protection as opposed to challenging the masculinist system - in other words, emphasising her legitimacy upon the gendered social norms and expectations around the feminine inferiority and masculine superiority. The interview excerpt reveals, moreover, in addition to the role-play around the ideal mother who is self-sacrificing especially for the sake of children, the strategic presentation also involves conforming to the *asexual* notion of lone motherhood dealt earlier in chapter 2 and in the first part of the present chapter. The highly appearance based performance around the ideal mother model in some ways reveal the ways this lone mother actually avail of the total sexualisation of female body to earn legitimacy and status that is good enough to access entitlements in what she has experienced as the fratriarchal public welfare system.

Lastly, it is worth noting the way she feels as a worthy subject as a mother rather than anything else, which in fact rather accurately mirrors the ways

lone mothers are foremost subjectivised in the formal discourses of the state earlier dealt in chapter 4. Further to note, here again, a theme of ‘women policing women’ is highlighted. The lone mother here explicitly recognises the ways ‘the aged female workers would be the same as men, if not worse’ and ‘women’s enemies are women’ reflective of the earlier notion of the female investment in the masculinist social order. We will see how such peer policing operates and is experienced in the everyday living situations in chapter 6.

In contrast to such acceptance-seeking practice, there has also existed a technique of negotiation involving a demo-like performance:

“Even if I needed the service to maintain the living for tomorrow, traveled there on a bus alone with a baby at the breast, a worker there came up with a thing like ‘the system is not updated yet for you to claim for this. So, come back again soon’. ... There was no way I was going home for that. I had no choice really in the matter, practically undoable. ... I was shouting at the top of my voice, making a protest, causing a scene. People there were staring. Eventually, a senior officer at the back of the office came and dealt with me. It did the trick – reaching the senior officer is like jumping on a fast track. He probably wanted to process my case quickly to get rid of that burdensome person. ... It was worthwhile doing as I had nothing to lose apart from that it was really tiring to go through it all.” [Lm 26]

That is, with the ‘mini-demo’ that involves causing a scene thus putting the worker ‘on a spot’ to attend and respond to her case quickly, it is depicted that the lone mother manages to counteract the unpredictability involved in the service and indeed the ‘state centred’ service delivery as dealt earlier – one that may be understood to be an enactment of reverse femininity or a strategic performance of irrational femininity, nonetheless for the same end

goal of achieving access to entitlement. Notably, again, it is revealed that the strategy of accessing the entitlement is not keyed upon the citizenry rights but rather being the 'burdensome' claimer as she herself identifies it is underpinned by the need for survival – the sense of urgency is such that it is to maintain the living for tomorrow.

In fact, in a similar vein, there has also existed an equally assertive 'mini-demo' way of negotiation, which involves a mother to visit the office in person regularly and make persistent appeals for obtaining the welfare service in concern regardless of being rejected even to apply for the service. On the other hand, the fieldwork has found a more dramatic way of protesting such as a case whereby a lone mother has put down 'I want to die' in the application form for the places for lone mother households in public housing – again, her action is found to be underpinned by the dire need to access that part of public welfare for survival and the understanding that she must heighten the worker's attention to her case in order to succeed. Notably, it can be anticipated that such type of appeal or strategic performance feeds on the sympathy especially as she emphasises her psychological vulnerability that accords to norms of femininity hence the possible acceptance, and also perhaps with the fear felt on the part of the worker that is underpinned by the notorious history of public welfare causing deaths of claimants who have failed to access their entitlements (see chapter 2) coupled with the media frenzy over such cases as dealt earlier.

Further to these strategic behaviours, it has been also observed that there also exists a mediated negotiation:

"In the family court, I have become acutely aware that woman in this androcentric order of society (*Otoko Shakai*) must be skillful to survive. I was not about to go to public welfare, expecting things to be fair and all that. My friend who is also a lone mother has introduced me a good place to go for treatments (for

autonomic disorder), and to get help to deal with public institutions. The doctor rang up the local welfare office for me, and also wrote letters. I had no problem. It was received well.” [Lm 50]

For one thing, rather contrasting to the play of policing among women here we find a theme of ‘woman helping woman’ to combat the androcentric social order. As depicted above, the mediated negotiated has primarily involved relying on ‘good enough’ agents for and behalf of the claimant to take a lead role in the negotiation via the telephone conversations, and formal letters. The agents may also give professional advice or instructions on the claimant as to how to approach the state with the particular case in hand. The art of negotiation is thus keyed upon tapping into the specialised knowledge and perhaps more importantly leveraging ‘the face’ of the privileged agents such as the solicitors and medical doctors who would help lone mothers to work around the subjectivity problems dealt earlier, and associated experiences of being dominated in the interaction process. Though at the risk of accepting to be less of a citizen on her own, this strategy has in fact emerged as a useful means to work around the accessibility problems both in terms of the structure of public welfare and various agencies of the state.

Having revealed the creative ways lone mother claimants may negotiate the various street level realities of access to entitlements, it is important to highlight that not everyone would or could participate in such strategic negotiations – that is, there are those who passively bear the unjust treatments, which can mean that there are lone mothers who end up foregoing their rights to welfare. The present chapter ends with a brief consideration around those lone mothers who may be at risk, potentially falling to experience the worst of all scenarios.

Prior to considering such lone mothers at risk, however, it may be useful also to know of a unique case around somewhat socially resigned behaviour,

which the fieldwork uncovered (for further consideration see chapter 7). It involved a few young lone mothers whose particular rationales around foregoing public welfare have reminded that the passivity does not necessarily equal victimisation:

“I feel ‘lucky’ that there is something on offer. One should use it if it is there (*Aurmono Wa Tsukaeba Ii*). There is no reason to restrain one’s self from claiming the service that is available. ... It is also true that there is no need to get it if it were to mean too much trouble (*Muri Shite Morau Hitsuyo Wa Nai*)” [Lm 42].

That is, with this group of lone mothers, rather than acting upon the moral rationalities underpinned by certain self identities, the decision for action/inaction against public welfare is based on pragmatic rationality. Indeed, the above lone mother has certainly identified neither with the devalued identities nor one of the citizen with rights – her expression of feeling ‘lucky’ about having entitlements highlights it. The thesis returns to deal with the cohort shift, tentatively put, in chapter 7.

In a notable comparison to such tentatively new cohort of mothers, other lone mothers whose voices are silenced have involved ones who are entrapped in role identities and indeed engulfed in devalued roles:

“I was offended by some of the things she said. I was thinking why I have to put up with this lady saying funny things. ... But well, it is the work of the state bureaucracy (*Oyakusho Shigoto*)... I felt only relieved (*Tasukaru*) that there was something there. I felt ashamed (*Hazukashii*) that I had to receive something, which for people of my age means ‘a help from the above’ (*Okami No Osewa Ni Naru*)... It is a pitiful situation (*Kawaiso Na Jyokyo*). Nonetheless I was feeling grateful (*Arigatai*) about it. ... I would not have claimed it if it was not for my children anyway. I only

received it temporarily when it was inevitable. It helped.” [Lm 11]

For one thing, the interview excerpt here reveals ambiguity involved in the issue of self identification – it was in fact commonplace to find the offer of various contradictory statements about the self. The first line of the interview excerpt gives glimpses of an identity of attachment to an idea of the self that is certainly not a subject to be pitied and given abusive comments while claiming her entitlements to say the least. As shown above, however, what comes across foremost is a sense of being engulfed or entrapped in devalued roles into the abject subject position ascribed by the state – this is a critical difference since so far it has been observed that the engagement in strategic negotiations is underpinned by the dire need to access entitlements, coupled with a sense of self as one in the democratic notion of the citizen with rights or at least an attachment to such self identification to a significant degree.

Indeed, the lone mother here appears to internalise a view of public welfare as the ‘last resort’ and a mercy shown rather than a right demanded, hence also the devalued and stigmatic identity of welfare recipients. Notably, the engulfment in the devalued role is such that her dominant persona emerges to be a passive and grateful claimant. At the same time, she also appears to internalise a particular mother identity that closely identifies with the child-centred motherhood underpinned by the ‘one-body’ ideology dealt in chapter 4. Mirroring such dominant identifications of the self that do not coincide with a notion of the citizen with rights, the moral rationality of claiming public welfare that is revealed is one of the inevitable or the ‘last resort’, and moreover, ‘for the sake of children’. Also, mirroring the engulfment in the devalued self and internalization of the traditional views around public welfare, she reveals the minimal expectation of public welfare, highlighted by the ways she identifies and accepts public welfare as ‘the work of bureaucracy’ that has a connotation of the top down bureaucratic administration, something opposite to the ‘user oriented’ service that is

recently endorsed in the state's formal discourses.

In addition, it was also the social surveillance or more specifically fear that other people may turn against the self if she were to step out of the deviant role and obtain what might be perceived to be a preferential treatment that underpinned the inaction or passivity of some lone mothers – taking a passive stance is perceived to be ‘the least bad’ option to say the least, which is taken to be important especially for those who suffer from fatigue of managing the livelihood in both the emotional and financial terms. Moreover, those who have internalised devalued identities as above tended to also internalise the stigmatic identification of the self as a lone mother, a topic which will be given a focused attention in the following chapter. The issue of bearing multiple stigmas is a significant one in considering one's fitness to negotiate – for one thing, as dealt in chapter 2, it is anticipated that people who are highly stigmatised will have a strong incentive to ‘pass’ or ‘save the face’. That is, being reluctant to be socially identified, it is likely that they prefer keeping the interaction with others to the minimal. Various issues with passing will be dealt more in the next chapter but here it is worthwhile highlighting that the tendency of social withdrawal of the passer means that the stigma affected individuals tend to lack resources in terms of the useful contacts who may be able to share appropriate information and assist her in the creative negotiation process. That is, not only these individuals will probably expect little but also it can be anticipated that they are neither willing nor fit to involve themselves in the negotiation process.

Chapter summary

The chapter elicited that severely resource constrained work environment coupled with the under-resourced policies, in addition to the ambivalent modernisation of public welfare at the legislative front (see chapter 4) mean that the delivery of progressive and enabling welfare work relies heavily on the workers' personal initiative and capacity. For one thing thus it

confirmed the importance of examining the street level of public welfare to understand the realities of public policies, and that the progressive legal codes cannot be taken at the face value. Given the socio-structural realities at the street level of the Japanese state, it appeared that despotic and gendered traditional welfare work is hegemonic – to say the least, even if workers aspired to be the modern enablers, the structural circumstances mean that they were often not afforded to be so. That is, tension and precariousness of ambivalent modernisation are thus felt not merely by lone mothers but also by the frontline workers who aspire to deliver the enabling work. The fieldwork observed that practices of progressive welfare practitioners do help but the capriciousness both in terms of the content and quality of public welfare service was marked. The street level agenda for the Japanese state has been already summarised at the end of the first part of the chapter.

Given the persistence, the chapter thus focused on uncovering insights of the traditional welfare work that is delivered at the street level, and the risks born by lone mothers at the receiving end. The key theme dealt involved the ways lone mothers faced particular subjectivisations, as welfare seekers, women, mothers, and the gender role norm deviator through which they were assigned devalued roles, policed, and disciplined – with the varied impacts on different lone mothers. The chapter indeed highlighted that lone mothers can negotiate with the practices of power exercised by the state agents. It showed that they can strategically find ways to negotiate their access to entitlements despite the variety of intangible hurdles surrounding their ‘rights’ for welfare. It is worthy to note, however, the strategies reviewed may work as ‘survival strategies’ but have the cost of perpetuating an unequal subjectivisation instead of claiming the respected self with equal rights implicit in the notion of being a citizen. Moreover, the psychological damage of having to engage in ‘auditioning’ or the strategic performances cannot be underestimated. Further, it cautions that such strategic responses are not available to all lone mothers. Those lone mothers who are engulfed

in devalued roles may not be able to negotiate and can end up falling through the safety-net that is often thought as their last resort. The thesis next turns to deal with issues of doing lone motherhood in the broader context of everyday living whereby it will examine more deeply the problems of socially devalued selves.

Chapter 6

Doing Lone Motherhood: issues of the role resisting selves

In my fieldwork, up to one third of lone mothers have had experiences of lone motherhood that are in contrast with the earlier introduced late modern notion of lone motherhood – that is, lone motherhood as a life choice and style, and divorce as the ‘second chance’ to find a new sense of self as a part of the late modern reflexive project of the self where the sense of self is formed through temporary attachments and continuous reflective redefinitions.³⁹ The current chapter evaluates the selfhood of these Japanese lone mothers, who have resisted the traditional female role, which I have earlier defined to be keyed around the idealisation of the ‘good wife, wise mother’ (*Rōsai Kenbo*) - resulting in the self imprisonment by which I mean here as the self that is trapped in the socially ascribed female role, *and* in the devalued self as the role norm deviator. It will reflect upon the various features of and factors that underlie role resistance, including how the role resisting self experiences the traditional demands of femininity to be the ‘good wife, wise mother’ but also the ‘self let loose’ under the ongoing precarious modernisation of the Japanese society. Having examined institutional aspects of subjectivisation earlier, here the thesis illuminates the ubiquitous profile of the subjectivisation process, recounting it through the interaction of various social agents at the everyday level including some reflections on the internal struggles within the self.

This chapter is structured principally around the stories of three lone mothers who while each being unique exemplify some of the common patterns of the self torment and coping in the accounts given to me. By focusing on these exemplars in some depth though there is the room to see them as more than simply ‘examples’ or ‘types’ of lone mothers. This

³⁹ For the significance of this proportion see chapter 3 that discusses the sample characteristics.

writing style aims to offer them a chance to 'speak' to us and show the depths, nuances and complexities of their experiences. It is also meant to remind us that complexity is the lived condition of lone mothers, whose experiences always exceed neat typologies though the examples do illustrate trends among the respondents. With that in mind, the first part focuses to evaluate how their key social subjectivity (and their key self identity underpinning the sense of self in the consideration here) *as mother* entails the problems of doing lone motherhood. This will be followed by the consideration of their self torment, specifically as the gender norm deviator or struggle around the 'spoilt self' – issues of stigma including the self engagement in performing the normalcy will be considered. Going beyond merely 'passing' in the sense of 'faking the self' as discussed in chapter 2, it also evaluates the slippery notion of masquerading – where the self finds that without the role identity, there is no sense of self, a theme that elicits a tragedy of emancipation for the self that has singularly developed the sense of self through the traditional female role identity. The experiences of other two-thirds of lone mothers 'who have escaped' these painful experiences of doing the self will be recounted in the following chapter.

Prior to my further evaluation of the fieldwork findings via the identity based analysis, the chapter begins with a 'geographical note' to signpost some of the geographical detail that overlay my thesis - the basis for future geographic development of the current research.

Everyday materiality and experiences of lone motherhood

I am here dedicating a sub-section to signpost the overlaying geographic intersections - local communal settings, social networks, and the related everyday materiality that surfaced also as important factors underpinning the uneven geography of welfare access and experiences of stress and stigmatisation. In below, I will briefly outline a number of intersecting accounts of lone motherhood that are not developed in the present thesis but

that could be usefully developed in future research.

In below, for instance, is an interview excerpt of a never-married mother who despite practicing a highly stigmatic type of lone motherhood in Japan, ‘escaped’ experiencing the trouble-ridden lone motherhood that will be dealt in-depth in the following sub-sections. Her *lifestyle* in a broad sense illuminates significance of specific micro-geographical arrangements that afford her untroubled experiences of lone motherhood:

“... I have never really felt that I have been under the public scrutiny for my lifestyle. I have always managed to build a unique environment around me...both in the workplace as well as in the nursery when my children were young. I have always networked with the people who disagree with the marriage system. Like me, they have children without entering names in the family register. When I moved to an island, I also belonged to the ‘outsiders’ community’, away from the traditional ones. It is important to have friends who can share your values. I have always had that kind of people around me... I myself have chosen this road so there is nothing to be ashamed of...perhaps, the way I have always lived in a community with people like me have helped. I have never felt any hard feelings directed at me (*‘Seken No Kazeatari Wa Kanjitakoto Nai’*).” [Lm 36]

That is, her untroubled account of lone motherhood is keyed to the ‘unique environment’, involving the workplace, the nursery, social network, and community in which she resides – ones that are organised around her identify beliefs. The safe *inclusive social milieu* in which she has always nurtured and lived provides a thick insulation against the possible stigmatising subjectivisations by different others. In fact, it is not only that the safe milieu affords physical separation to some extent from stigmatising

neighborhood surveillances and street interactions, which will be dealt later in the chapter, it also affords her a variety of empowering resources. For instance, it emerged from further conversations that her 'like-minded friends' are well-resourced in terms of the knowledge-base (e.g. how public welfare plays out in practice), and well-connected to other empowering milieux (e.g. the feminist guideposts which will be described in the next chapter). Moreover, these friends are willing to make concessions to help her out on the *daily temporal* childcare *needs*, and so forth – forming a critical resource to ease her time-space coordination issue, which in turn helped to cope with the 'unpredictable' and burdensome demands of public welfare (see chapter 5) for instance.

The tales of previous chapter are indeed confirming of the significance of these resources that she is able to draw. For instance having an access to peer or *practical* information on how to *actually* access and effectively *utilise* entitlements was shown to be an important factor in attaining the full benefits of the available public welfare. Moreover, the fragility of lone mothers who have no one else to turn to but the androcentric public welfare was also revealing – signified previously by the themes involving: having to take “a baby at the breast” on a bus during the journey to local welfare office; having to make multiple visits to the welfare office as a peripheral worker and an over-burdened mother; and public welfare meaning the “last place of hope”. The *emotional and practical* implications of '*dealing alone*' with the gendered subjectivisation and other unjust treatments in the public welfare zones involved serious costs – namely and crudely, failure to access entitlements and mental illness or even suicide attempts.

That is, the everyday materiality matters in terms of the access to welfare resources, and indeed experiences of stress and stigmatisation or more broadly the experiences of doing lone motherhood. It is not merely the physical separation to different others through which inclusive social milieu provides protection to role pressures, it is also the ease of access to

empowering resources in and out of the local community that affords the lone mother the untroubled experiences. Chapter 7 will expand on these empowering resources, and recount how they help in resisting role pressures whilst in below the chapter gives further accounts of role pressures revealing the significance of the capacity to resist them.

Trap of motherhood

One intriguing finding of the interviews with lone mothers (see chapter 3 for the interview processes) was the way role resistance underpinned the problem-ridden accounts of lone motherhood. The present part examines specifically the lone mothers' discourses around their experiences of and indeed struggles around 'being attached' to the socially ascribed feminine role that is keyed upon the 'good wife, wise mother' idealisation. Given my fieldwork observation that a lingering separation tends to signify the self that is stranded in a role identity, I focus here to make sense of lone mothers' accounts of their long-term separation. To develop insights around the self that is stranded in the traditional gendered role and the concurrent torment over doing the self as lone mothers, the chapter will focus upon the accounts of two separated lone mothers, and one divorcee who has had the experience of breaking out of the long-term separation in order to suggest the richness and complexity of real life circumstances.

The women have different social backgrounds, and there is a wide variation in their rationality mix that is in the degrees of reflexivity and the issues (be they financial, social or emotional) they have to consider. It will be illuminated that these varied rationalisations underpin their role resistance, and shape the extent and nature of any role tension experienced by which I mean the felt torment over conforming to the role norm. More specifically, in the case of the first lone mother, a sense of self that is built via 'over investing' in the ready-made female ideology is highlighted as a key factor that underlies her rationale for 'holding onto' the role identity of the 'good

wife, wise mother'. I say 'over investing' since the self is not able to find a viable sense of self other than the impersonated feminine role character hence there is a 'backfiring' of the female investment leading to the anxiety over the self loss. The second case illuminates an added dimension of role tension – here, rather than singularly (and very tightly) ascribing to the traditional role identity hence the role tension being almost solely about a sense of knowing that the self is no longer viable, it addresses frustration over the split self in a sense of being attached to the traditional self and aspiring to be otherwise. The final case, a lone mother who has managed to divorce after a long-term separation, highlights how it is difficult for a woman who has long conformed to the traditional contours of social life keyed around the 'good wife, wise mother' role norm to find a new sense of self and find the divorce as the 'second chance', even after managing to break out of the long-term separation.

The story of role resistance unfolds with a lone mother in her late forties with two children who are now over twenty years of age. Having secured the family home and pensions, she herself claims that she is relatively privileged in financial terms compared with other lone mothers. At the time of the interview, she has been separated for two years since the husband has moved out of the family home for a woman whom he wishes to marry, which she has strongly opposed:

“As a mother, it is unthinkable to put my interests before children. I am a mother and I live as a mother... I neither know how nor wish to be anything else. I just want to be whom I have been always. Once one has children, even if younger generations of mothers tell me that the society now allows one to 'reset', I do not believe that it is the right thing to do. Fathers too, they should not do things that make children cry. ... To me, divorce is out of question. To me, marital breakdown was not only about failing marriage but also failing life. Everything I had worked for and

believed in was taken away just like that... I had protected the livelihood of the family by selflessly enduring many things for years. I have played the role of 'good wife, wise mother'. I have let go of many opportunities to follow my own dreams for the sake of children. I cannot bear the fact that my husband's selfish act this late in life has destroyed it after all my time and effort. You know, it feels like 'how could he do this to me now after all that I have put in to keep the family in place?' ... The divorce for people of my generation has a bad connotation... One would relate to sad stories like forced double suicides of mothers and children having been abandoned by their husbands. ... Divorce is not an option for me...even in reality I know it has all already fallen apart. People I met in 'Hands-in-Hands' [a self-help group - see chapter 3 and 7 for detail] tell me that I should let go and enjoy a single life now... To me, however, that is a misfortune in the name of freedom (*Jiyu To Iu Fukō*).” [Lm 49]

She aims to maintain the *status quo* as the married mother despite being aware of positive ideas of divorce such as an opportunity to 'reset' one's life and 'enjoy a single life' that are reminiscent of the late modern notion of divorce as the 'second chance' to find a new sense of self and lifestyle. Moreover, she is even self aware of the way she is 'clinging on' to the paper-status, and the reality that 'it has all already fallen apart'. It has also emerged that she is not troubled by financial issues – the key obstacles to divorce that typically faced lone mothers, which will be discussed later. For what reasons then that she still finds the divorce as 'out of question' and being let out of the role conforming self and life as a 'misfortune in the name of freedom' as she speaks?

For one thing, she herself claims that she has always conformed to the role norm of the 'good wife, wise mother', the idealised woman figure in Japan (see chapter 2), and in particular shows a strong attachment to being the

good mother in this sense. On another side of the role responsibility that involves selflessly acting upon the interests of the family but foremost for children, there we find such role ascribing woman's gendered moral rationalities that identify divorce as shameful, and bad for children. In turn thus she identifies divorce as a mark of deviancy as she internalises the pejorative social notions around those who deviate from the role norm. That is, the role resistance is underpinned by the self that endeavours to maintain the viable sense of self. More seriously, however, the role playing self for her is hardly the masquerade in terms of her sense of self. She almost personified Doniger's (2004) claim, dealt in chapter 2, about the ambivalence involved in masquerading - she may have initially played the role but performing her self in the gender ascribed role has become her. Her commitment and engagement in the role is mirrored in her account of the marital breakdown as not simply the marital failure but 'failing life'. Symbolic of such hard-hit norm domination upon the self is the way she herself speaks of 'always' being the mother, the ways she 'live(s) as a mother' and actually she does 'not knowing how...to be anything else'. That is, slippery as it may be, the gender role conforming self has become her, what she is, without which the self is lost. Her torment for 'not finding the option' of escaping her role while being conscious of the sense that it is a masquerade will be recounted more later in the chapter.

Her background as the role conforming self has also meant the sizeable self sacrifices as she speaks, which is now felt to be 'too great' the opportunity cost (of role conforming) to let go - an added dimension to the way why the pressure of the role disengagement for her is felt to be a 'misfortune in the name of freedom'. What might be termed as the late modern project of self (though the idea is lurking around her) is thus rejected, her self reflexivity demobilised, put on a break. That is, being lifted out of or emancipated from the role norm and the associated traditional contours of social life does not necessarily mean an automatic experience as the 'second chance' or of liberation for those who have heavily invested in the role or lived the self

tightly around the traditional arrangements.

In contrast, the following account by a lone mother suggests a new ‘ideal face’ or sense of self – she does recognise divorce and single life in a positive light as a lifestyle choice. On one hand, such an alternative vision of the self makes this lone mother appears as a more promising contender for transgressing the traditional female role. However, it emerges that the role negotiation is difficult for her too, for reasons that will be uncovered below, not to mention that inspiration around the new ideal self can bring on an additional stress of the role tension or the split self:

“I have not prepared anything for divorce. You think over 15 years is a long time but to me, it feels like a thing of yesterday. It did not feel long to reach this age. When my husband left, my second child was just born. ... Thus far, I have not been able to choose the other way... There was no other ways in fact. One after the other, something happened. ... I always had the intention to divorce. ... Divorce? No, it was not an option. I have been focused on raising children and too busy to think about anything else. It is not possible to bring up children with part-time work. Anyway, if anything were to be done, I was going to wait until my children grew up...until they are both adults. You could say that I stayed in marriage for the sake of my children. I did not want my children to suffer.” [Lm 47]

Her role tension and indeed the felt strain are apparent and symbolised by the way she says that she has ‘always had the intention to divorce’ and yet says it is ‘not an option’. Her case reminds that having a desire to divorce may not necessarily equivalent to a practical option to divorce. Her story is such that she has always been too busy to give serious thought to or prepare for a life choice of such magnitude. Moreover, she reasons that her employment situation and economic opportunities are too constrained for

her to opt for a divorce.

Once again, the gendered moral rationalities of not divorcing ‘for the sake of children’ is also raised – which is one of the recurrently raised reasons for resisting the marriage that is already practically faltered. When specifically asked what this means in the interviews, it actually reflects several phenomenon. For one thing, the self sacrifice ‘for the sake of children’ is a part of ‘the proper things to do’ of the mother who ascribes to the traditional maternal culture of the ‘good wife, wise mother’. It has also appeared to be the internalisation of a pejorative social judgment on lone motherhood, which is a notion of divorce as ‘bad for children’ as popularised in Japan and generally in the west, which can in fact entail serious diswelfare upon the child as explained later. On the other hand, it is not merely about internalisation but actually a calculated response to the perceived social reality whereby children of lone mother households can face pejorative judgments and social treatment in social institutions such as schools and companies. That is, in this light it is a strategic behavioural choice to protect her children against the possibility of unfair social treatment.

Though merely being a prognosis in the present research, there are indications that some lone mothers consciously, or at the fringe of consciousness, also conveniently used ‘for the sake of children’ rationality or the mask of a ‘good mother’ to legitimate the things that she did or did not do. It is nonetheless worthwhile also noting that such telling of the particular rationality is encouraged via the enormity of the ‘moral lever’ of motherhood discussed in chapter 2 - that moral lever frames the situation as one of the self-sacrifice ‘for the sake of children’, which may be seen to be an attempt to build a viable story to tell that would be not merely less penalising upon the viable sense of self but also less of a target for social demonisation.

In addition to prevent the mother from making the self progress that is to

face up to the marital realities, the fieldwork witnessed this rationality of not divorcing 'for the sake of children' can subject the child to bear the unwanted baggage or indeed blame for the mother's self negation – situations that illuminate one not so glorious aspect of the 'one-body' ideology of the mother and child that sits at the back-to-back with this particular gendered moral rationality of the role resisting Japanese lone mothers. The interview excerpt of the same lone mother that has had more to offer about wanting to divorce yet feeling that is not a viable option shows that how that gendered rationality backfires, and results in wedging her in the female role:

"I have always played the 'good wife, wise mother' but now, I want to take care of myself as an 'individual person' (*Hitori No Ningen To Shite*). It is not that I want to abandon my children but I want to live with them like equal partners once they are over twenty years of age. ... It is stressful to live like this. I do not know when my husband is going to stop providing. My life as it were can collapse on any day. It is not like I prefer the life of the separated... It is just better than losing my home (which her husband pays the mortgage) and having to lead a miserable life by divorcing. I just do not see any merit in getting a divorce now. Once I am divorced, my livelihood will not stand. I will have to look after my children, all by myself (she has noted during the interview that her separated husband has been providing financial as well as some other forms of parental support though only on *ad hoc* basis). It is an accepted social practice. My husband is not the kind who will voluntarily care for them once we divorce. It is almost an automatic thing, you divorce and mother takes on the children. But my children are no angels... Because of the stressful familial circumstances, they have both become violent. ... I now want to find full-time work but I have missed my chance to build a career. I never had the opportunity to participate in society as a

proper worker. I sacrificed myself for my children. There are not many jobs available for someone like me especially at my age. When I married and had children, I chose children rather than career... It was a social practice then. Do I regret that? I probably do but even to this day, any choice that involves children brings on the dilemma. There is a gap between my ideal as an individual and what is socially expected of me as a mother. It is unfair. Men are able to reset very easily but women cannot. Once women have children, we are assigned to be mothers...socially and psychologically. That is how it is." [Lm 47]

Here exemplified is my prior concern over the welfare risk of practicing 'good' motherhood (such as not divorcing for the sake of children). As several lone mothers recounted, this lone mother explains above that the long-term condition of the stressful familial circumstances troubled the child, which in turn caused the serious diswelfare for the mother as she faced domestic violence from the own child that is now looming to be a spreading social malaise (with various social and familial causes underpinning it).

This child problem (especially given that her children are uncontrollable) puts an enormous pressure on her not merely in terms of managing her everyday livelihood but also her 'choice' to maintain the *status quo*. It is with the anticipated responsibility of having to care for the child completely alone that reinforces her role entrapment. Though she blames the social practice that assumes the mother, rather than the father, cares for the children, the role pressure is not merely externally exerted. Though with the role tension that is for her signified by the split image of the self that desires to be self prioritised but also resists maintaining the role, she internalises to a certain degree about the social expectation upon mothers. What is shown above is an insight to the enormity of the 'moral lever' of motherhood, and the gendered capacity to negotiate the caring role (e.g. see Finch, 1989) that in effect affords fathers to 'reset' while leaving mothers to be stranded in the

same role – even with the resentment felt about this gendered social practice, she feels unable to reconcile it within her self. What this also shows is the resulting fragility of self *vis-à-vis* motherhood, that is, being seriously restrained to attain other possibilities of the self compared to the case of men being afforded to pursue their interests and needs outside the masculine role – the line of ‘once women have children, we are assigned to be mothers’ is revealing of her resentment towards this androcentric fate of maternity.

Such anticipation over having to become solely responsible for the child is tied to a financial rationality about maintaining the *status quo*. Though it does not at all guarantee the financial contribution from the father, not divorcing at least prevents the loosely sustained marital arrangement from drastically faltering that can have a dramatic impact upon her livelihood in terms of the property and disposable income. That is, her case highlights the gendered financial capacity to divorce alongside issues of social roles. Indeed, it is not that she ‘prefers the life of the separated’ as she speaks but maintaining the *status quo* for her means the ‘least bad’ option - once she is divorced her ‘livelihood will not stand’ given the insecurity over her financial capacity. She illuminates that such state of financial capacity is not merely due to the gendering of the current employment situation, but the lifelong gendering of employment careers. By her gendered role conforming decision to ‘choose children over the own career’ she has been deprived of the opportunity to build career, and become wedged into the gendered life course of being the financial dependant. From the discussion in earlier chapter, the slippery alimony system, which we have seen allows men to escape the parental and socially ascribed breadwinning role contributes to sustain such role imprisonment.

In addition, in fact, this lone mother has been to the local welfare office ‘as a last place of hope’ to turn the situation around and break out of a self that is wedged in the gender ascribed role and life course. What awaited her was

nonetheless an experience of being subjectivised as a married woman, and treated 'as if the part-time work is seen to be good enough for women who have married' – that is, as dealt in chapter 5, rather than being emancipated from the androcentric fate of maternity and marriage, she has found herself being regulated or 'checked back' to be imprisoned in the traditional feminine role. That is, public welfare has failed her - belie her citizenry rights endorsed by the Constitution (discussed in chapter 4), she has found that she is not afforded to make the choice to divorce and attain selfhood as an individual citizen, with a result of having to bear the stressful and fragile state of her livelihood symbolised by her comment that it 'can collapse on any day'.

One positive experience that may be uncovered here involves the way her degree of consciousness of engaging in the gender ascribed role has become heightened through her struggles around ascribing to the female role. In fact, the *de facto* marital breakdown or lone motherhood has emerged to be a powerful way through which many lone mothers have found themselves awoken to reflect upon the gendered social mores, practices and the self, which they have initially accepted 'via tacit agreement' (*Anmoku No Ryokai De*) with a huge degree of unconsciousness. The following chapter will deal with how this process of role scrutiny may be helped, and what it entails upon the selfhood of lone mothers.

So far, the section has considered the accounts of lone mothers both of whom have, in the end, remained in a long-term separation. Naturally, one might wonder what happens if a lone mother does divorce; how she reaches the divorce and whether this will enable her to 'reset' her life or emancipate her from the role identity? The fieldwork found just one case of a lone mother who had succeeded in breaking out of the long-term separation (of over ten years). Now, in her early fifties, she revealed a telling story of the lingering role resistance:

“I feel sorry for my children though I think I did the best I could do at the time. I suffer from this feeling of guilt even to this day. I would always feel shameful as a mother... My husband is remarried and has a new family. It is an unfair world. My children and myself remain affected by the whole trauma while he moves on as if nothing has happened. For men, it is easy to ‘reset’ while women are left to struggle with the problems of the failed marriage. One thing is that it is hard for a woman to renew herself from a housewife to a self-reliant woman. Without the inheritance, I could not have supported myself let alone paying for the mortgage and so on. My job alone would not have been enough. Another thing is that my children... One of my children was led into delinquency because of the way it was in our household... She stopped going to school, commit petty crimes, became violent and to this day, does not hold a job. Naturally, I got the custody of both my children. ... I still live with the problems from my marital failure... As a mother, I feel responsible. It is ok for him you know, it is not like he lives with such problem. Divorce did improve my life in that I did not have to worry about him or whether he would stop providing. But divorce did not cure everything. I still live with the consequences while he does not.” [Lm 4]

First of all, it is only with the ‘extra help’ of her own family, such as the lump-sum inheritance and specialist advice from her own friend on the family accommodation, that she has found divorce as a feasible option – again, this lone mother has found her job alone is ‘not enough’ to make a decision to venture out from being a housewife towards becoming a self-reliant woman. Such an account of the process leading up to the divorce in fact verifies many other lone mothers’ claims that women’s capacity to opt for a divorce rests crucially upon one’s financial strength. Given the gendered employment market and career situations of the role resisting women, it is readily conceivable that the reality of the life choice to divorce

is 'gender-unequal'.

Despite having a divorce, however, she continues to be imprisoned in the role of a good mother – indeed, it is shown that she 'as a mother' feels responsible over children, which is again elicited to be a gendered experience; father manages to move on 'as if nothing has happened', which confirms the fear of the previous mother over what happens to the allocation of parental responsibility upon divorcing. Moreover, it is revealed that this role attachment results in her sense of guilt towards the child despite the over-proportional commitment in parenting. This was a recurrent theme – the troubled child of the long-term separated lone mother, and the mother expressing a sense of guilt. In fact, to say it is merely about a sense of guilt is misleading as the fieldwork has observed that the discourses around the own child have often involved a sense of torment and frustration for not being able to feel as 'a good mother', fueled by the way to varying degrees the role resisting lone mother has internalised the dominant maternal culture that holds the mother responsible for almost everything about the child. Again, her sense of failure shows the paradox of good motherhood that makes it extremely difficult to live up to the self, and at the same time warns of the risk that it imposes upon the child's welfare. The paradox of the role model mother that is in Japan underpinned by the 'one-body' principle about the mother and child is such that the more the mother is entrapped in the role, the more risk there is that she actually fails to attend to the child's needs or worse even oppresses the child's self developments, which can in turn make her feel as a bad mother despite having been committed in being 'the good mother'.

Having recounted how lone mothers can experience the imprisonment in the gendered feminine role as the good mother, the next part recounts more on the self risks of internalising the dominant gender norm in terms of the self as the gender norm deviator.

Stigma implications: struggles of the self as the gender norm deviator

To follow from the experiential accounts around being imprisoned into, and to a varying degree internalisation of the feminine role as the good mother are the associated experiences of being engulfed into the devalued self as the role norm deviator. That is, this sub-part addresses lone mothers' experiences of the self torment in terms of the self as the gender role deviant. First, the present part reflects upon the identification of the self as the 'spoilt self' whereby the highly stigmatic identity of lone mothers will be revealed. The self accounts of being engulfed into the devalued role is also dealt. Second, the role pressure that ensures the lone mothers dealt here to feel bad and inferior is located and evaluated in terms of the peer monitoring or policing. Finally, lone mothers' accounts around engagement in the performance of normality in terms of 'passing' (see chapter 2 for the conceptual discussion) will be dealt in terms of how it is done, and with what implications for the passer.

As discussed in chapter 2, to be affected by issues of stigma, one must internalise the very culture that attaches stigma to the particular self. The empirical findings of the thesis paralleled this – that is, rather than being a part of a separate culture that is often labeled as the deviant culture (see Gerstel, 1987; Peng, 1997; Seccombe *et al.*, 1998; Smart and Neal, 1997), they subscribed to the dominant maternal culture underpinned by the ideal of the 'good wife, wise mother', which in turn resulted in their own self identification as the spoilt self, the deviant to the norm. More specifically, it emerged that they internalise the dominant social notions about mothers who deviate from the female role norm in Japan. Reflective of the 'double deviance' as dealt in chapter 2 that subjects the norm deviated *women* to a powerful stigma, these social notions and the self identifications involved highly negative expressions:

‘*Kurai*’ (dismal); ‘*Hazukashii*’ (ashamed); ‘*Kawaiso*’

(pitiful); '*Sekentei Ga Warui*' (bad social reputation); '*Wagamama Na Onna*' (self-indulged woman); '*Jibun katte*' (selfish); '*Warui Hahaoya*' (bad mother); '*Hahaoya Shikkaku*' (failed mother); and even '*Rakugosha*' (failed person) or '*Jinsei Ni Shippaishita*' (life failure).

That is, not merely have they felt penalised for failing the marriage *per se* – they also struggle with the sense of failure as a mother and woman. The notions of 'failed person' and 'life failure' reflect the moral lever of motherhood dealt in chapter 2 but also the risk born by women whose role identity is so central that becoming a lone mother or divorcee is experienced as a fatal blow to the sense of self.

The engulfment in the socially devalued role was such that the negative descriptions of the self were given despite the different experiences of the of becoming and being lone mothers that in many ways vary from, *and contradict* the stigmatic social notions attached to lone motherhood. Indeed, the lone mothers most affected by stigma would use these epithets about themselves while outlining how their lone motherhood resulted from serious failures on the part of the partner in fulfilling the breadwinner role so that the welfare of the household, especially that of the child, was threatened. The commonly cited reasons for marital failure involved the partner's problems not merely in the lack of earning as a breadwinner but rather damage to the household through alcoholism, gambling, loan sharking, adultery, and domestic violence.

This was the case with a lone mother (Lm 11) dealt below who explains that her entry into lone motherhood was 'inevitable' so she speaks yet she internalises the devalued social connotations about lone mother, and indeed engulfed in the socially devalued self. Far from finding the new sense of self, she struggles to live up to the ideal self whom she once was:

“Lone mother households have bad social reputations. However, it is not just the reaction of others that bothers me. It is myself more than anybody who is having a problem with it. I am embarrassed to be a lone mother. I myself look down on myself. ... I feel ashamed. In comparison to widows who get public sympathy, divorcees are looked upon as self-indulged mothers who have failed to put children’s interests first. I am a failure...a bad mother. ... It was inevitable but I still doubt whether I did the right thing as a mother.” [Lm11]

That is, she herself is prejudice about lone mothers as she internalises pejorative social notions. She experiences exactly what Goffman (1963: 18, emphasis added) predicts – the development of a shameful feeling, which arises “from the individual’s perception of one of his [*sic*] own attributes as being a *defiling thing to possess*, and one he can readily see himself as not possessing”. It is not merely the ‘bad social reputation’ and the ‘reaction of others’ but it is the internalised sense of shame and guilt from which she suffers. The descriptions around the ‘reaction of others’ involved expressions of ‘being looked upon coldly’ (*Shioi Me De Mirareru*) and ‘people turning cold shoulders’ – that is, the way it was received involved a sense of ambiguity, which meant that the self suffered from a sense of not really knowing whether she is being unfairly treated. In fact, in chapter 2, it has been highlighted that seemingly unfair treatments are difficult to politicise partly because of the ambiguity involved in the cause of, actual expressions, the ways people are often ‘rarely conscious’ of their prejudicial bodily reactions and the way such seemingly unintended actions are judged in our social system. The fieldwork has observed that the ‘self doubt’ as in the above shown case is also a significant factor that silences that feeling of being unfairly treated.

It has emerged that ‘reactions of others’ involve more than ambiguous and

tacit cues however – explicit prejudicial social treatments operated to affirm the sense of inferiority and the self to be entrapped in the devalued role that is, a ‘bad mother’ as she speaks:

“When my child was small, whenever she did anything wrong at nursery, I was told off by the older members of the child minders that I should be more careful with my child ‘because our household is fatherless’ (*Chichioya Ga Inain Dakara*). ... Whatever she did wrong, my marital breakdown, the fact that we are a lone mother family was penalised as the cause of her misbehaviour. It was very hard to take... I hated going to the nursery to pick her up because these child minders made me feel extremely guilty. I was already feeling bad enough for my child. It was like a constant reminder that I was a bad mother.” [Lm 8]

That is, the lone mother is made into a target of social surveillance due to her single status – notably, having to rear her child, she is more prone to be socially identified and put under the critical spotlight than the divorced fathers who live by themselves and are more afforded an escape from social scrutiny. Moreover, her experience accords with a phenomenon of the so-called ‘master status’ whereby the stigma attribute supersedes all others and come to be the core identifying attribute of a person who possesses it and through which almost everything s/he does or does not do is understood (Goffman, 1963). To make things worse for the mother, the master status of lone motherhood is such that it is used to account for the child’s behaviour, rather reflective of the maternal culture that sees the mother and child as ‘one-body’ that readily holds the mother (but not the father) responsible for any shortcomings seen in the child.

As dealt with earlier in this chapter, and also illustrated in the above interview excerpt, what emerged as a prime theme around social surveillance was the peer pressure, that is the pressure exerted by their role

conforming counterparts upon lone mothers to be entrapped in the inferior role typified by the notion of a 'bad mother'. The prejudicial or discriminating experiences were indeed recurrently depicted in terms of a theme of being 'bullied by housewives':

"My sister is jealous when she hears that I am doing well. She will call me, just to say things like 'oh, your household must be poor and depressing since there is no breadwinner father. You poor thing.' As a housewife, she will not take it if I were to look happy and enjoy my lone motherhood." [Lm 31]

"I am often told like, 'poor you, you have to work'. I get that a lot from my housewife friends in neighbourhood and my child's school friend's mother. It has a nuance of jealousy. I enjoy my work and they know it. Some bored housewives cannot stand it if working mothers are happy, especially someone like me who has divorced, not tired and sad-looking. They are resentful about me gaining freedom from home and husband, not house-bounded, dependent on husbands like they are." [Lm 4]

For one thing, the first interview excerpt (Lm 31) reveals the policing behaviour of the own sister against her. It is in fact worthwhile highlighting that not only in their neighbours, colleagues, the related persons of the child's schooling or the state agencies, finding the 'peer bully' in their own family, whether that may be the own mother or sister, is a possibility. Theoretically, it can be anticipated that one factor that underpins such occurrence involves the fluidity of stigma; the way it can spread to people who are socially identified to be in close association with the stigmatised person. One notable lived implication is that such familial situation can powerfully deprive lone mothers of a vital resource to even call upon, which is an important issue given the state of the safety-net provided by public welfare dealt in the previous chapter.

Moreover, what both interview excerpts but especially the latter (Lm 4) depict is a theme of the social conflict of the working breadwinner mothers *versus* the ‘house-bound’ male dependant housewives that underlies the ‘bullying’ or social policing. One lone mother offered some clues over as to why the welfare of lone mothers may be an emotionally charged matter to housewives:

“Those housewives who want to become independent but are unable to do so have a ‘housewife complex’ (*Sengyō Shufu Konpurekkusu*). They do not mind lone mother households so long as we keep to the pitiful and depressing image. But once we cross over that line and lead a happy-independent and prosperous lone motherhood, then they will not take it. They believe that they are better than us. ... For example, there is an unwritten rule that lone mother household should not own a car with the ‘3-number plate’ (supposedly the new expensive car). I know also that housewives feel it is unfair that we have public assistance. They think it is unfair that the ‘self-indulged’ women who have acquitted women’s role to keep the household together get the public help. I guess when they see us doing well, they feel discontented or what do you say, competitive. They will bully my child or myself. I guess they have an urge to do or say something to put us down.” [Lm 21]

We might note that she recounts the pressure to appear pitiful and depressed reinforcing the story of performing neediness for social acceptance that was recounted in the previous chapter in terms of accessing their entitlements, she gives further insight of that devalued role assigned to lone mothers in relation to the matter of a car ownership whereby lone mother households are expected to keep to an inferior standard.

The above lone mother moreover locates the factor underlying the deviance

designation in the jealousy felt by the role conforming housewives towards lone mothers. That jealousy is depicted to result from the way housewives do actually have the desire 'to be like lone mothers' – in a sense the bullying thus mirrors one group of women projecting their feelings of role tension onto other women. From earlier analysis, another angle to understand such deviance designation, and perhaps also the sense of ambivalence felt on the part of traditional mothers, is the precarious modernisation and the heightened ambivalence in the role codes that is unfolding in what might be called the recent late modern Japan. The defiant aspect of the femininity of lone mothers in the late modern Japan offers mixed messages to those who have bought into the traditional, 'ready made' femininity. In a social order where role codes are increasingly multiple and fractured, labelling lone mothers as deviant does not simply reinforce the superiority of the role conforming women, but it can also represent a different choice symbolising the shifting role codes and the faltering traditional contours of social life, in which traditional mothers take shelter. That is, the 'female offence' committed by lone mothers is not merely a shame or threat to men but also a challenge to the role conforming women.

Further, it is also worthwhile highlighting that both groups of women share the difficulty of escaping the problem of 'not ending up feeling bad' about their particular motherhood or parental choice. The parental choice is an emotionally charged matter especially in the current ambivalent ideological climate. It is a 'flawed topic' that people can easily slip from affirmative to pejorative – and this problem is expected to be more serious for women than men whose role codes of 'the proper things to do' are multiple and fractured whereas those of men's are changing but only slowly (see Segal, 1997). Notably, the ways women can feel bad for not being modern and working but also for not being traditional and staying at home to care highlight the difficulty of striking the right balance or indeed the 'hybrid self' (Rosenberger, 2001) that seeks to live in harmony with the varied ideologies in presence.

Another feature of the torment felt by the role resisting lone mothers involved being conscious of 'playing' or 'faking' the self as 'the normal' – that is, engaged in what Goffman has called 'passing', which is a form of self parody though it is more precisely 'faking the fake' for these role resisting lone mothers since in the first place, the feminine self keyed around the 'good wife, wise mother' is also a masquerade socially imprinted upon the Japanese women (see chapter 4).

Although discussing role performance can seem to imply a hidden or authentic self behind the masquerade, in the case of the lone mother dealt earlier and in below (Lm 49) it can be observed that the masquerade is so habituated it becomes the very self. She explains how it feels to live up to the self:

"I cannot be alone though meeting others is equally tormenting. ... After all, I can only pretend to be like one of them... I know very well that I am no longer like them. I am filled with the feeling of inferiority and emptiness (*Rettokan To Kukyokan*). I am often paranoid that they all know what is actually happening... Whole thing is depressing... I am tired of leading this double-life but it feels that there is no way out..." [Lm 49]

That is, she suffers from the classic symptoms of bearing a stigma attribute such as that of being self aware that she is 'no longer like them' and the associated self devaluation. She also suffers from the secondary effects of 'passing' as anticipated - that is, she suffers from the feeling of alienation, anxiety over her 'false' identity, and indeed having to lead the 'double life' as she identifies. Her self torment is deep-seated as she does not know how to be anything else other the role conforming mother as dealt at the beginning of the chapter – the feeling of emptiness and the way she finds that 'there is no way out' expressed above are telling of her identity and

existential crisis.

Additional insights about masquerading, the life as 'passing', and indeed female investment that is now backfiring are shown below via another lone mother's interview discourses:

"I had always been a housewife. Since I have married, my friends are kind of all acquaintances... Housewives in my neighbourhood and mothers of my children's friends. They only know me as my husband's wife and as a mother... Wife is next to nothing once husband is gone. ... All sorts of things we do, we do in his name, like the participation in the local cleanup day, neighbourhood association, and so forth... Even the name at the door, it is his. It is not unusual for people to ask me 'what my husband thinks about this' and so forth when I am in a process of deciding something in the hospital or shops. You cannot get away from your husband in that sense even though he is gone... We used to receive all kinds of seasonal greetings and gifts. Once my husband has gone, however, there is nothing. It feels somewhat disconsolate. Once he has gone, I feel that we lost the link to the public world." [Lm 1]

That is, having built her social network upon the gender ascribed role, and adhered to the gendered custom of having the husbands as the window for the public world, the loss of the husband to her has turned out to be not simply the absence of one member in the household but to mean the loss of the viable self to access her own social network and the 'viable face' of the household to relate to the public world – hence the expressed feeling of social alienation. In other words, it is not only that it is unsafe to unmask because of the bullies but again what is shown is a theme around a masquerade without which her self is put in jeopardy. There is thus a sheer pressure upon the self to 'live up to the impersonated self' – it is nonetheless the self of the past who has had the *relational existence through the husband*

that is at stake here hence that the best she can do is to self impersonate, and hide the loss of the husband.

With ‘passing’, she may be spared of the full impacts of various penalties born by the persons with stigma attributes including the loss of her own social network that rests sensitively upon her pre-stigma identity, which some lone mothers mentioned, the interview excerpt reveals its limits. For one thing, it is revealed above that ‘social reminders’ are everywhere, she finds, that work to affirm her sense of differentness or more precisely inferiority – via the everyday interactions or more specifically the social customs that assume the husband to be the representative of the household and to be the authority. Moreover, it is not difficult to imagine the psychological strain born by the passer of such self imprisonment – role-playing the familiar wife while already discovering that ‘(w)ife is next to nothing’. Now, being outside the role norm, she is no longer to ‘benefit’ from the androcentric hierarchies in the ways she has done so in the past – rather, the very identity and by the same token its projects, relations and structures that she has supported and invested now backfire and ensure her sense of inferiority and social marginalisation.

Being close to ‘losing the self’, it was thus not a surprise for the passer to suffer from psychological illnesses – the suicides attempts were the most blatant ways via which lone mothers expressed the sense of chaos around the self existence. What might be termed as the moderate sign involved the experience of being pushed aside or having ‘no place to stay’ hence the social withdrawal:

“I did not want others to know about the situation (i.e. marital breakdown). Also, I did not know who to turn to... I found it difficult to associate with my neighbours and friends during the time when our state of relationship was practically in separation. I became withdrawn and very depressed, and eventually diagnosed

as suffering from the autonomic disorder. My child became unstable as well and that also put a lot of pressure on me. I used to work but soon after, my employer told me 'I cannot have someone mentally ill in my company. You are not fit enough to work here' and I got a sack. Being separated is bad enough... It is difficult to explain, as the situation is neither one thing nor the other. There are not many people who will accept you being separated and unemployed as well as suffering from mental illness. People will accept a poor single mother, trying and working hard for her children but not the confused one, staying at home. So, you remain in silence... You cannot tell anybody. That was the worst time in my lone motherhood. I bottled up everything and it was all extremely depressing. ... There was no place for me (*Ibasha Ga Nakatta*). ... Nowadays I realise that this combination (of being a separated mother, unemployed and suffering from psychological illness) is quite common." [Lm 21]

In this quote the stigmatising effects ramified from neighbourhood to work leading to acute mental distress and illness for both child and mother. Her need to conceal her separation prohibited her from seeking help at an early stage which could better facilitated the child's welfare needs and prevented her later psychological illness. With the separation and especially the development of the psychological illness, her life literally dwindled - having developed the psychological illness or with the multiple stigmas, she tells of the experience of being pushed aside to occupy the diminutive space in society. Notably, what underpins such processes of social marginalisation and alienation is the narrowly framed social acceptance towards lone mothers and also more broadly of the socially presentable self in various social situations whether at work, with neighbours or friends. This in itself is a problem to be dealt while highlighting that it is useful to note that as the lone mother above reminds, uncovering the issue of stigma and changing its covert social presence are socially challenging tasks as the stigma affected

self can find that she can hardly find a place to exist let alone raising the voice about what she is experiencing.

Conclusion

The present chapter shed a light upon lone mothers' self torments around the self being stranded or imprisoned into the gender role conforming self and the devalued self as the role norm deviator. From empirical accounts around these, it attempted to understand why and in what ways some lone mothers have found doing the self as a lone mother in Japan problematic, and divorce something other than the opportunity to find a new sense of self. Through uncovering their issues of doing the self, the chapter illuminated how lone mothers are experiencing the resilience of gendered traditional role norms, but also the precarious modernisation both in terms of the ideological ambivalence and the slow structural change.

The observation around the role resisting self has shown that the gendered moral rationalities that the divorce is shameful and moreover it is 'bad for children' stood as obstacles for the self from getting out of the role conforming self and the life course. To lone mothers whose selfhood was keyed around the Japanese female idealisation of 'good wife, wise mother', divorce was a serious threat to the viable sense of self. Moreover, the chapter revealed that for the self that has spent years sacrificing the self in the role identity, not only that the opportunity cost of the role investment is felt to be too great to let go, the role playing self has become no longer the masquerade in terms of her sense of self – it has emerged that at stake is not merely the viable sense of self but the sense of self in itself. This is a significant point since it means that being lifted out of the traditional gendered subjectivity is not necessarily automatically a liberating experience for women who have invested heavily in the role, and moreover developed the sense of self singularly around it.

The role tension entailing from the strong role attachment revealed deeper insights about the self torment of the role resisting lone mothers. The chapter uncovered frustration experienced by the role resisting women who find it unable to negotiate the role because of the powerful role pressure exerted both socially and internally. Moreover, it has been revealed that the role pressure to care for children is not merely about caring *per se* but it also exerts financial pressure, which is a serious issue for women with low-paying jobs. Indeed, the financial capacity to divorce has emerged to be one of the key themes that underlie the role resisting women's strong resistance to maintain the *status quo* as dependants – the financial insecurity that is fuelled by the career background of women who has conformed to the gender ascribed role is such that it does not actually allow them to see the divorce as a feasible option.

The early part of this chapter revealed compelling stories of the role resistance through the experiences of three lone mothers, together with insights about the variability in the rationality mix that underlies 'the choice' to maintain the *status quo*. More specifically, the first two lone mothers shared the act of remaining in the long-term separation but contrasted in their experience of role tension. Though in both lone mothers, the sense of performance had a conscious presence, the struggle of the self in one lone mother was more about 'not knowing how to be anything else' rather than the frustration over the split self in a sense of being attached to the traditional self and aspiring to be otherwise. The former reflected the 'backfiring' or over-investment in the female role, while the latter showed added factors involving the androcentric social practice and structures that obstructed her to acquire the new sense of self or turning the situation around into a 'second chance'. The third case revealed the experiential stickiness of the traditional gendered subjectivity as the good mother – the lone mother remained stranded in the role even after succeeded in breaking out of the long-term separation.

The chapter revealed, however, the problems of doing lone motherhood keyed upon their identity as an ideal mother explain only a part of their self torment. The second part of the chapter focused on describing their problems as being the role deviator. Here, it uncovered the highly stigmatic self identifications, such as the 'self-indulged women' and 'life failure', which mark the 'double jeopardy' of failing a gender role. Notably, the engulfment in the devalued role was considered both as a matter of the internalisation of the dominant maternal culture, and also one that was affirmed by the peer pressure. The chapter revealed how the peer monitoring or the so-called 'housewife complex' as informed by the interviewed lone mother is underpinned by the ways the parental choice is an emotionally charged matter. The heightened peer policing of lone mothers driven by the precarious ideological and structural situations as the traditional contours of social life fray around the edges facing the role conforming women revealed an added problem of doing lone motherhood in the ambivalent modernity. The illuminated difficulty of feeling good about a particular choice of motherhood whether being a role conforming traditional or modern mother highlights the challenge, which the state faces to take on – in contrast to the late modern vision of the 'gender-equal society' initiative, a particular 'choice' of family formation and motherhood remains to be a flawed topic as opposed to a more positive notion of lifestyle, that is simply a matter of choice.

The consideration of lone mothers' experiences of 'passing' uncovered further problems of doing lone motherhood that are keyed around their engulfment in the devalued role. In fact, the more slippery notion of masquerading or self impersonation added insights about lone mothers' problems – among the various psychological strains born by the passer, it has highlighted the ways the passer feels 'unsafe' or even 'not possible' to take off the mask – the experience of almost 'losing' the self is uncovered here. The reflexive endeavours of finding an alternative subjectivity or sense of self are shown to be problematic for those who have not been previously

obliged to acquire multiple selves. The existential anxiety of such lone mothers noted earlier is a topic of social concern.

The chapter has thus highlighted that doing lone motherhood for some real lone mothers more reflects the 'least bad' option or more precisely struggle to maintain the *status quo*, rather than the recent notion entering in the white paper as a life choice or simply one variant in lifestyles. For those who had tightly ascribed the self to the dominant maternal culture keyed upon the 'good wife, wise mother', the project of self was more about resisting the role rather than the engagement in a reflexive self endeavour. The peer pressure was one of the key social issues underpinning the self being stranded in the role conforming self. It was noteworthy that the peer pressure on one account reflected the precariousness in 'the proper thing to do' as a mother – feel good about the self as a mother is made difficult whether being the role norm ascribing women or being outside the role norm.

To relieve both parties, diversity in parental choice must be affirmed both in culture and social system. Another social issue is to relieve the financially trapped lone mothers - not merely the effort of de-gendering the employment market but also the social practice of parenting must be amended; the women's career issue cannot be separated from the social practice of motherhood and ultimately also of fatherhood. Indeed, the chapter highlighted that problems of doing lone motherhood are keyed to the gender relation – gendered opportunities to 'reset' the self and life course as earlier recounted mean that women's gendered problems are certainly tied to the behavioural patterns of the male counterparts. Reforming men's role in the family and parenting is a necessarily component in solving lone mothers' problems. One way the role pressure exerted internally within the self might be tackled is to foster social opportunities whereby one can explore various possibilities of the self so the chapter has learnt. Being fixated with the gender ascribed masquerade

whereby one's sense of self becomes dangerously tied not only to the narrowly framed self but also a singular self is a risky state of affairs that creates a fragile self as recounted. Finally but not least, the chapter also signposted the possible geographical development of the research – particularly through the topic of everyday materiality, and the impacts on the experiences of stress and stigma, and access to welfare. The next chapter focuses to inform how lone mothers may escape the problems of doing lone motherhood dealt here.

Chapter 7

Doing Lone Motherhood: issues of managing the self ‘let loose’

The previous chapter focused on examining the experiences of lone mothers who have been caught up in the traditionally social prescribed feminine role of ‘good wife and mother’ (*Rōsai Kenbo*) and for various reasons and to differing extents ended up defending their gender identity and projects. The picture of lone mothers being imprisoned in the role norm and internalising the pejorative social judgments around lone motherhood are however not the full story. The present chapter focuses on other two-thirds of lone mothers sampled who have demonstrated social themes and actors beyond the straitjacket of the traditional Japan. It deals with the experiences of lone motherhood for those who have more or less successfully avoided being affected by issues of stigma or problems of doing lone motherhood dealt previously. The active reflexive synthesis of the self that is the self reflective endeavour is the key theme here underpinning such success (in terms of escaping stigma) though a contradictory theme of resigned self in a ‘social drift’ will be also addressed with a tentative suggestion of the cohort shift. The chapter highlights variable dimensions involved in achieving the stigma avoidance – identity belief, one’s ability to cultivate an inclusive social milieu are among the factors considered. While the chapter illuminates the optimism about the self ‘let loose’, the stories recounted will also confirm the sentiment elicited in the previous chapter that doing the self in Japan is a precarious project.

Prologue

Goffman’s (1963: 17, emphasis added) observation of stigma as dealt with in chapter 2 reminds that an issue of stigma arises “only where there is some expectation *on all sides* that those in a given category should not only support a particular norm but also realize it”. He also suggests:

...it seems possible for an individual to fail to live up to what we effectively demand of him [*sic*], and yet be relatively untouched by this failure; insulated by his *alienation*, protected by *identity beliefs* of his own, he feels that he is a full-fledged normal human being, and that we are the ones who are not quite human. He bears a stigma but does not seem to be impressed or repentant about doing so (Goffman, 1963: 17, emphasis added).

Moreover, he recognises the possibility of self learning – an act of ‘passing’ (see chapter 6) is framed to be a part of the so-called ‘moral career’ (Goffman, 1963: 125), a socialisation process that can end at a state where the stigmatised person “can come to feel that he should be above passing, that if he accepts himself and respects himself he will feel no need to conceal his failing” (Goffman, 1963: 125).

The bulk of my fieldwork sample (see chapter 3) accorded with such observation, and illuminated that the self can indeed more or less successfully avoid being stigmatised by social norms through a variety of processes and strategies from conscious active resistance to norms through to social resignation. This chapter identifies such processes and strategies through which the self is afforded to avoid or reduce the chance of being affected by issues of stigma and self devaluation. The chapter begins with voices of those who have not been actively reflexive initially but learnt to release the self from the devalued self. These cases will be thus self learning or long-term accounts around the idea of the self as a project - thus they were once engulfed in the problematised self but have now escaped it. The first section offer, admittedly self selecting, testimonials to the efficacy of politicised interventions and projects in overcoming stigmatisation. Rather than a politicised process, the subsequent sub-part focuses on the ways active practices of the self can aid lone mothers to escape the problems of

doing lone motherhood as dealt in chapter 6. Here experiences of divorcees who have not internalised the pejorative notion of lone motherhood will be addressed. These respondents carefully ‘work through’ rather than ‘fight with the system’ and override the demands of the traditionally social prescribed role norms to successfully pursue a lifestyle and project of the self that are not role conforming. This is followed by a consideration of the voices of lone mothers who were equally active in their reflexive endeavours and never subscribed to traditional role norms but rather consciously pursued an alternative life choice not merely as a personal project but as a political statement. The chapter ends with a tentative suggestion that there may be a cohort shift. This last possibility is discussed in the context of younger generation respondents who seem to present a resigned rather than an active reflexive self where they are seemingly in a ‘social drift’. This last theme that contradicts the dominant pattern identified about resisting stigma and somewhat dilutes the positive notion in the chapter title here. It however importantly leads the thesis to consider beyond subjectivisation, and even emancipation to make sense of the selfhood of people in Japan – a topic, which I will briefly return at the end of the thesis. The chapter concludes with a summary of factors underpinning the ways some lone mothers escaped the problems of doing lone motherhood and being affected by issues of stigma despite being outside the role norms – through which it will show how the emancipated self from the traditional contours of social life might be successfully managed.

Self re-learning: guideposts to find an alternative sense of self

The research sample included a small number of lone mothers who have been previously engulfed in the devalued self, but have now reached a state ‘above-passing’, in Goffman’s phrase, whereby the self no longer feels the need to dissemble, learning to embrace the newly acquired identity. The present part considers their experiences, which provide long-term accounts around Goffman’s theory about the self that is more often known for its

focus on short-term performances. At the same time, the moral career of these women offers an alternative account to Giddens' idea around the reflexive self – though not as fluid as Giddens suggests, the project of the self of these women reveals that they can re-identify and indeed the selves can become as the reflexive endeavours. The key theme here is the ways the reflexive synthesis of the self becomes enabled and mobilised - aiding the self to dislodge itself from the imprisonment in the devalued self and become the reflexive endeavour via developing a capacity to self manage the sense of self and indeed resist internalising the ways others subjectivise the self. The guideposts underpinning the self learning process will be also highlighted.

Several respondents could identify key influences and turning moments when they broke free of sticky traditional subjectivities. Here is one lone mother's account of how she embarked on the self transformation through which she has managed to 'come out' of the self imprisonment:

"I have gradually come to learn why things have been problematic. For me, it happened as I read a book on early development history, came across *Nikoniko Rikon Koza*, and joined self-help groups such as *Hand-in-Hand*. Also, I still have the private counseling sessions. Once one is able to see the problem objectively, many things do begin to change though gradually. Others may not change but you yourself can change. I have been told that and I believe it is really so." [Lm 21]

She highlighted the importance of developing consciousness over the partiality involved in the androcentric view of the social world often 'imposed' as if impartial and the related traditional sense of self to which she had subscribed in order to resist being 'culturally imperialised' (see chapter 2) or stranded in the inferiorised self. In her case in fact, her sense of self was greatly influenced by her mother's who apparently imposed her

own sense of failure onto the daughter. It was explained to me that her self was constrained as the mother ‘peer policed’ the daughter to be the deviant or role failure. With this lone mother, it was with the education-aided consciousness that the self became a reflexive endeavour – more precisely, the turning point of reading a book that gave rise to a string of consciousness raising activities arose when she recalled a name of an expert in a particular field of psychological health that she encountered while studying at an educational institution.

As highlighted by the above mother, in the context of my research, the alternative guideposts to make sense of the self or re-identify involved various types of therapies, counseling, and the feminist political projects such as the seminars on ‘divorcing with smiles’ (*Nikoniko Rikon Koza*), led by Madoka Yoriko, who is a member of the House of Councillors and vice president of the Democratic Party of Japan, and a prominent feminist politician.⁴⁰

Here below, one lone mother tells of her experiences with the feminist political projects – ones shared by many others who have learnt to come ‘above passing’:

“Attending Madoka Yoriko’s *Nikoniko Rikon Koza*, and joining *Hando-in-Hando* turned out to be the turning point for me. How do you say, ‘the scales fell from my eyes’ (*Mekara Uroko*) as I found positive and also pragmatic ideas of divorce. ... It was a rare place where I was let out and felt allowed to freely talk about things without being looked cold upon. It took some time, nevertheless, before I can even begin to talk. I myself lost sight of myself and unsure about many things then. ... I became able to see what has been actually happening and eventually accept the joyful idea of lone motherhood in myself through making friends there, listening

⁴⁰ Further information can be found on her webpage: <http://www.madoka-yoriko.jp/>

to others' stories, and having a series of opportunities to tell a story of myself." [Lm 44]

Indeed, it was not merely the pragmatic assistance but also the offer of wholly new and de-stigmatised notions of divorce and lone motherhood that came across strongly in the discourses around the significance of the feminist political projects. The expression 'the scales fell from my eyes' (*Mekara Uroko*) that exemplifies the 'awakening self' that is becoming conscious of the androcentric evaluation of the self, which she had previously internalised, is typical of those used by similar lone mothers about acquiring membership of a new group and developing a new sense of self – which reinforces the earlier introduced idea about motherhood as practice.

The interview excerpt also reveals the value of the safe inclusive social milieu that is afforded to lone mothers by the feminist political activities – the ready-made social opportunities are especially important given the socially isolating circumstances that are typically born by the imprisoned selves dealt in the previous chapter. As in the case of one lone mother who experienced the interview session with myself in a similar way (see chapter 3), such safe venues afford them a rare chance to explore and 'make sense' of the self biography and in turn to become the reflexive endeavour to find the alternative viable sense of self, and valued goals. The sense of self of these lone mothers is supported then by a social circuit that is outside or different to those with 'normal' social values and experiences.

However, it has been found that accessing these guideposts that offer alternative interpretations of motherhood (or ultimately of the self) is not easy – the role strain of 'living up to feminism' is revealed by an interview excerpt of the same lone mother:

"... I remember the seminar had attracted various criticisms in the

media, especially the way it flaunted the cheery divorce-hood. I too thought divorce was bad and something gloomy. It would be a lie to say I myself had no repulsion towards it when I saw it in a newspaper. The positive depiction of divorce was a bit of a shock initially, something hard to accept. You can imagine, things being that way, it took a good courage out of me to attend it. ... Even after joining, I did find it uncomfortable to be with some people there with whom I did not identify. Anyways, in the first place, it has been hard to attend the activities as much as I have wanted to do. I was busy raising children on my own while working everyday. I think there may now be quite a few social resources for lone mothers to use to get over things but generally, I think we do not actually have the privilege, like the time to find them and get involved.” [Lm 44]

With regard to the negative attention of the media, others have indeed talked about the ways the seminars on ‘divorcing with smiles’ were reported in the media as a social threat, encouraging women to get divorced rather than restraining, which has in turn triggered the whole debate about the child’s mental health, and the family disintegration. That is, as it is typically the dominant theme elsewhere, the popular social image of the feminist political activity has been one of the catalyst for the ‘moral panic’ in society, which is underpinned by the ways such activity is a threat to the masculinist projects and the social mass that invests in and supports them. Moreover, the interview excerpt suggests that internalised pejorative social judgments about feminist politics can problematise one’s access to the self re-learning opportunity. Indeed, the stigma affected lone mothers dealt in the previous chapter have most typically simply disregarded, if not keenly showed repulsion against, feminist projects.

The social stigmatisation of the feminism reduces the ability to access this resource – a situation that also applied to alternative guideposts such as

mental health clinics and so forth. In addition, these lone mothers hardly offer a sense of shared group identity due to the wide variation or differences within the group. Furthermore, the lone mother here highlights the practical difficulty of engaging the self in the feminist political project, requiring time resources when the time budget of lone mothers is typically already strained by the traditional lines of inequality in parenting and paid work. In fact, there is a sense that the opportunity to access and engage in such social opportunity may only be afforded to the privileged class, rather reminiscent of the class division within feminism. That is, living up to feminism to explore the alternative sense of self, is not easy for some however useful it may be. The next will reveal that not everyone's transgression of the traditional femininity is political or even deliberate.

'Personal but not political' lone motherhood: 'personal' project of self

Rather than replacing the viable sense of self that has become obsolete hence the endeavour to find the alternative guideposts, the key theme here is the self facing up to and fully engaged in the continuous and never-ending project of the self or reflexive endeavour, taking an ownership in making sense of the self and choosing its life narratives via proactively reflecting upon the varied frame of references including the old and new. These are the stories of the highly self reflexive selves of divorcees who have not internalised the pejorative notions around lone motherhood. Shown will be their remarkable capacity to defend themselves from traditional others and demands – crucial to their well-being, especially as they pursued lone motherhood in a relatively 'mixed' environment where their daily lives involve regular interaction with the 'normals' (versus the stigmatised), a situation that contrasts with the lives of political mothers who tended to live their lives in a network that was primarily composed of people who shared the similar identity beliefs.

One divorcee in below takes account of her sense of self as she offers the

narratives on her 'life journey' as she speaks:

"I never saw marriage or divorce as a major milestone in my life. It is just the waystation (*Tsukaten*) in my life journey. To me, being a lone mother is only a partial part of me – it is not everything that I am. It is just an accident that has happened at a certain point in my life. I just think that it will be good if I can make it into a turning point to find success in life." [Lm 18]

That is, neither the marriage nor the divorce is the ultimate or key component in the shaping of her sense of self or selfhood – her sense of self is not singularly fixated on wifehood, motherhood or lone motherhood, and indeed it is reflexively (re)defined as she progresses with her life journey. There expressed also is a strong sense of ownership that she takes around her project of the self - rather than internalising the pejorative notion of lone motherhood, the self actively enacts upon the fateful moment to 'find success in life'. That is, the self here is depicted as a reflexive project and divorce as a 'second chance' as Giddens (1991) has anticipated.

The divorcees who have escaped issues of stigma have showed a strong resistance to internalising the traditional social norms, and a capacity to cultivating a sense of self that is not keyed upon the ways the self is typically subjectivised by others - for instance, one divorcee expresses her view of the familial norm:

"You do not know what is 'normal' (*futsu*) really. To us, it is normal to be the two (i.e. the mother and child). Who are to say that the household with a father means the only one that is 'normal'" [Lm 25]

Here, she reveals resistance to the social norm and the social pejorative judgments around those who deviate from the familial norm – it is shown

that she does not allow the self to readily internalise the ways others may subjectivise her however socially dominant such subjectivisation may be. Also, her discourse confirms Goffman's theory that the socially stigmatised self may not necessarily devalue the self, and remind that they may even doubt and reject what are conceived to be the norm.

Another divorcee reinforces such an account of self capacity against the social pressure to conform and indeed the social subjectivisation around those who deviate from the role norm as she reveals the ways her sense of self is untouched by the potentially self devaluing social mores:

“The social mores about not getting a divorce ‘for the sake of children’ is incorrect. I actually divorced for the sake of my children. I think it is sad that people believe it is disadvantageous for the child to have one parent. Lone motherhood is better than two-parenthood if one were to lead a married life while forever feeling discontented. If people tell the child that they are thought of as a subject to be pitied, then the child will find that there is something wrong. It is that kind of thinking or discriminating frame of mind that should disappear not the lone mother household.” [Lm 17]

In contrast to the powerful effects of maternal culture upon the role resisting selves dealt in chapter 6, here the lone mother rejects the dominant maternal rationality. For one thing, as she criticises the naturalised social mores and practices and locates the problem in the ‘discriminating frame of mind’ not in the divorce in itself, she is successful at escaping the engulfment in the socially devalued self. It also reveals her strong sense of self confidence or even superiority about the life choice that she has made and indeed the self being compared with others, which will be discussed more below.

As it may be anticipated, such ways of self subjectivisation have implicated

in discourses around the issue of social surveillance or peer policing dealt in previous chapters that are rather different to those of the mothers dealt in chapter 6. For instance, here the same divorcee as above talks specifically in reference to the potentially self denigrating experiences of peer policing:

“I have my own life philosophy. I would say that my own conscience was negative about myself if I were to feel that others identify me with negative thoughts. The most important thing is what I feel about myself not what others think about me. So I always think about myself positively and do not let others’ thoughts spoil my self-esteem.” [Lm 17]

That is, as highlighted by the discourses of the lone mother (Lm 25) earlier, again emphasised is the lone mother’s sense of self that is based upon her self beliefs rather than the ways others may subjectivise and evaluate her – she is proactive in taking the ownership in shaping her sense of self. With such formulation of her viable sense of self, it is revealed that she is afforded with a remarkable resistance to others’ responses in terms of the implication upon her sense of self.

In terms of the sense of superiority that may be partly aiding the self resistance against the pressure to conform and peer policing, here a different divorcee gives interesting insights of such sense of self or the differences while talking around the pressures to role conform exerted by other women:

“Well, there are so many meddlesome women. If I wear a new ring, I get hassled by sarcastic remarks as if I should not be able to afford it. People also tell me to get remarried... I get that a lot. But you know I just put that kind of comments to a difference in values. It does not really bother me. I am just different. In reality, there are many women of my age who would actually prefer to be like me if they can earn their own living. I guess many of those things I get

from housewives stem from a bit of jealousy.” [Lm 7]

Given that she recognises her difference more as the specificity which she values rather than the inferior otherness (see Young, 1990), she is ‘not bothered’ as she speaks by the peer policing. Moreover, again, the anchored theme is that she is even able to rationalise why others may respond to her difference in such a way - there is also an element that she sees it even as a superior difference as she articulates around an idea of the ‘housewife complex’ dealt in the previous chapter – her insights of the covert reality around conforming to the gender ascribed role that is experienced by women hints about the ‘reverse-stigma’ in place.

Further to such self capacities underpinned by the strong ownership exercised upon the shaping of her sense of self, some of the divorcees’ project of the self has reminded that one possible feature of a successful project of the self in the current Japan involves one’s ability to tap into the opportunities of being ‘let loose’ from the traditional contours of social life (see chapter 4) while at the same time managing the lingering hold of the traditional line of inequalities and contemporary risks arising from the role codes precariousness. The interview excerpt in below reveals an interesting account of how one divorcee has shown awareness over the risk of the precarious emancipation afforded these days and consciously mitigated against it:

“Divorce to me? I would say that it is a ‘joyful divorce-hood’ (*Akarui Batsu Ich*). I would not have divorced if it were to adversely affect my children’s schooling or future. Prior to the divorce, I explained to them what I have in my mind and asked them for their opinions. I specifically told my children that ‘I would put up with my marriage if you were to be led into delinquency and turn the responsibility around to blame it on my divorce’. They had to promise me not to do that. I told them ‘how

you live your lives are your responsibility'. Only when both of my boys agreed to promise that I was ready to take it to the next step. ... I would not let the children or myself to face the world in a half-hearted way. There is no one right thing to do these days – well, on a positive side we have more opportunities than the people of the past but at the same time, there is no sure thing anymore. You cannot be just sitting back as before. You know, it has come with prices to pay. You can put the life of yourself and the children in jeopardy if you take it too lightly and carelessly jump on those opportunities. It may be easier to divorce now but it is not like the society is free of old habits all around. I think leading a happy divorce-hood can be difficult if you and your children are not prepared.” [Lm 7]

For one thing, as if she is taking a strategic action counter to the ‘one-body’ culture about the mother and child (*Boshi Ittai*) that can have a threatening implication upon the welfare of herself and the child as dealt in chapter 6, she has made a conscious effort to manage the marital breakdown in such a way to minimise the possibility of the child’s future issues becoming loosely intertwined with her own issues of the marital breakdown prior to the entry into lone motherhood. Moreover, her discourse of ‘there is no sure thing anymore’ reveals the sense of uncertainty of life underpinned by the precarious openness unfolding in the contemporary order of Japan – there is recognition of the positive aspect but also somewhat the nostalgic sentiment over the simpler world though constraining. Nonetheless, she strategically achieved the so-called joyful divorce-hood via reflectively acting upon both the late modern and traditional contours of social life.

Notably, there were also a few stigma unaffected divorcees who experienced the divorce in pressurised circumstances and provoked into divorcing without having such privilege to lay a strategic shield around her sense of self or offer the child a choice in the process of divorcing. They

nevertheless managed to stay clear of becoming stranded in the self blaming and self denigrating processes shown in the previous chapter via *promptly* managing to obtain the appropriate care for the self and the child – as they were not engulfed in the devalued self and ‘passing’ or the ‘one-body’ culture of motherhood.

Finally, in the consideration of the ways the divorcees have ‘escaped’ stigma, it is worthwhile noting the finding of an anchored biography:

“I have always wanted to be independent regardless of whether being married or divorced. It is wrong that people think that I am working because of my marital breakdown. I have been working for a long time now because that is the way I like to live my life.”
[Lm 7]

As one divorcee reveals here, the anchored biography is such that not merely the viable sense of self but the practical living arrangements (e.g. social network; earnings) are built independent of wifehood and motherhood. For one thing, in turn, they are thus spatially found elsewhere in the research as the shared living arrangements or biography is not as distinctively spatialised as one of the never-married mothers dealt next. More importantly, they are thus neither imprisoned in the role playing self nor caught up in the ‘financial trap’ that have problematised the lone mothers dealt in chapter 6. In fact, on a separate note, the interview excerpt also reveals an interesting empirical insight around the social environment surrounding a career woman in Japan – it is hinted here that there is an element that the state of being a woman and working can be socially pejoratively identified as a stigma symbol or failing the role.

Finally, it has emerged that while for some the particular life arrangements that have partly aided them to escape stigma have come about as more of a fortunate accident - some divorcees have revealed that the working lifestyle,

and what might be thought of as other non-conventional living arrangements were found as a result of the wisdom fostered via exposures to feminist ideas at universities. Though not consciously planned, these have helped to maintain their reflexive project of self - highlighting the significance of the feminist education in aiding women's life choices.

Never-married mothers: political life choice but also a 'social drift'?

Never-married mothers are possibly one of the most socially demonised sub-categories of lone mothers in Japan. In my interview sample, however, it has emerged that *as a group*, they are by far the least troubled by their subjectivities as mothers or gender norm violators. Within the same social category, one sub-group consisted of 'political mothers' whose choice of particular practice of motherhood mirrored a political statement and who actively rejected to live by the traditional contours of social life. In a stark contrast, there was also young cohort of mothers whose never-married motherhood was neither about a political statement nor conscious life choice – in fact, tentatively, it even appeared to symbolise their resignation from social engagements. Rather than actively acting upon the social contours or frame of references, and coming to build a strong identity belief, in turn helping to shield the sense of self from others' evaluations, these lone mothers appeared to escape issues of stigma through being socially resigned - though it would be too extreme to say they were socially dead, there was a sense of nihilism lurking in those selves or more appropriately termed social drift or resigned selves. That is, while the illustration here reveals the polarised ways lone mothers escaped issues of stigma, it again (see chapter 6) cautions about the emancipation of selves – this time, perhaps not necessarily keyed to the emancipation of selves from the traditional gendered roles but alluding to the broader theme of the selves being 'dropped' from various social subjectivities, and hence 'having to do the selves' without any particular 'codes of proper thing to do'.

The 'by-choice' non-married lone mothers had strong identity beliefs that well-insulated them from stigma effects. These were lone mothers who have acted upon the key feminist slogan of 'personal is political', and practiced political motherhood:

"I accept neither *Ie Seido* (the patriarchal family or clan system) nor the marriage-by-law.⁴¹ From the time when I was at University, I have been against that kind of thing. So, it was a natural decision for me to opt for the never-married motherhood. I had always been the head of a household in the residential register even though at times I had lived with my partner." (Lm 36)

That is, as shown above, those who practiced political motherhood held strong identity beliefs and a firm ascription to a sub-culture that are typically aided by their educational backgrounds that have allowed them to become fully conscious of the feminist political thoughts. As shown, the chosen style of the role norm deviated motherhood is in itself a political statement, mirroring their intentions to politicise and challenge the androcentric social order that is underpinned by the various gender-unequal social contracts including the marriage that are imbued with patriarchal social mores and practices.⁴² As a part of the political efforts in fact those politically-engaged never married mothers keenly promoted themselves with a subjectivity as the 'never/non married' (*Hikon*) rather than one of the 'yet to be married' (*Mikon*) – they endeavoured to politicise themselves with a new social label of *Hikon* rather than the more conventional label of *Mikon* as the latter is regarded as naturalising the idea of married motherhood.

⁴¹ *Ie Seid* is now abolished in a formal sense but its reminiscences remain in the social system (see chapter 4).

⁴² The formal marriage to this day normally embodies a social connotation of the 'woman to enter the husband's house or *Ie*' unless specially arranged to be otherwise. Accordingly, it is woman who is socially expected to change the surname into that of the husband's and man registered to be the head of the household.

The interview discourses of the same lone mother revealed in fact that her strong identity beliefs are expressed not merely in terms of her psychological shield but also the micro-geographies in which she is interwoven – introduced earlier in chapter 6, in the sub-section that dealt with the topic of everyday materiality. It showed that she maintains her never-married motherhood in an *inclusive* social milieu that is organised around her identity beliefs. The beneficial functions of her micro-geographical setting involving the workplace, the nursery, social network, and community were described earlier, including the way it: fosters her capacity to resist the role pressure both via the spatial alienation from different others and proximity to empowering knowledge-based resources; and enriches her everyday materiality via which her time-space coordination issue is eased which in turn empowers her to draw on welfare resources outside her inclusive milieu - affording her the better access to welfare in and out of her local settings.

Finally, the fieldwork found younger never-married mothers who escaped the problems of doing lone motherhood as accounted for in the previous chapter, in a rather contrasting way. Since my fieldwork involved a small number of younger lone mothers, let us *tentatively* examine the cohort shift – a theme which is in fact attracting an animated speculation whether there is now the emergence of a the ‘downstream’ (*Karyu*) (Miura, 2005) or even crudely ‘losers’ (*Make Gumi*) that is not merely a low income group but meant to signify the social divide in motivation (Yamada, 2004).

In below is an interview excerpt of one of those young lone mothers talking about her current state of living – in contrast to the earlier recounted never-married mothers, her escape from troubled lone motherhood is not due to identity belief or ability to cultivate an inclusive space:

“That feels new to be called as one (as a lone mother). It is simply a state of things that I have a child and live like this. ... Living like

this, things can get tough for the child but I expect my child to put up with the current state of affairs (*Gaman Shite Hoshii*). ... Self reliant living (*Jiritsu*) [prompted to comment]? I am neither aspired to be self reliant nor believe that is possible or necessary.”
[Lm 42]

That is, her lone motherhood is simply a ‘state of affairs’ as she speaks rather than a life choice or lifestyle that is consciously sought-after or achieved. As shown, she has not subjectivised herself as a lone mother, exemplifying the extent of the meaning lone motherhood as a social typology exerts upon her sense of self. She is also alien to the traditional maternal culture - her discourse around the child coping contrasts with the sense of guilt expressed by other lone mothers who internalised traditional role rationalities of ‘for the sake of children’ and ‘one-body’ ideology about the mother and child (*Boshi Ittai*). Furthermore, she is equally detached from the detraditionalised figure of a modern working mother. She is not at all shy about receiving welfare payments to support her ‘state of affairs’ while rationalising such deed as ‘one should use it if it is there (*Aurmono Wa Tsukaeba Ii*)’ as already considered in chapter 5 – a sense of pragmatic rationalisation is highlighted rather than ‘the proper thing to do’ attached to a social identity. While her reflection on the self reliant living that it is not possible signifies that she is not simply leading her life with whims, that there might exist a tinge of frustration over the socio-structural constraints, her consciousness of not being aspired to be or feeling the need to be also suggests that the sense there is more of resignation. A strong sense of identity or sense of self was not identified during the interview. Rather, her rationalisation of being or the ‘state of affairs’ as she speaks appeared to reflect the self in a social drift, and pragmatism. What would be the emotional life of such self? I leave this to be explored in future research.

Conclusion

In contrast to the selves in distress underpinned by their gendered subjectivities, the present chapter recounted the varied ways the selves 'let loose' in Japan escaped issues of stigma – important cues for women in Japan to successfully manage the precarious emancipation.

The chapter began showing the variation involved in the process of stigma avoidance by examining the experiences of once the stigma affected lone mothers. With these mothers, the key theme involved the re-learning of the self – that is, discovering and learning to accept the alternative (to the one that is self constraining) meanings of and ways of doing their key subjectivities motherhood, lone motherhood, and more generally the self. The key guideposts to aide this process included the feminist political projects. Not merely the offer of alternative non-masculinist standpoints but also the importance of safe inclusive milieu was highlighted to allow for the re-learning of the self or the self to engage in the reflexive role scrutiny.

What stood against the success of such consciousness raising projects and also the self to make progress in the 'moral career', in Goffman's terms, was the role pressure, discussed in the previous chapter. The outreach of the feminist political projects appeared to be constrained due to the stigma attached to them. The self regulating nature of a role identity nor more or less also deters the stigmatised self to make use of them. At the same time, it also addressed that the challenge of transgressing the androcentric femininity and projects this way is not simply due to the internalised pejorative social judgments about feminist politics but also the difficulty of 'living up to feminism' underpinned by the lack of resources suffered by some groups of individuals reminiscent of the class division within feminism.

The present chapter also recounted the active practices of the self of divorcees who have not internalised the pejorative notions of lone motherhood. Given that they had not developed the sense of self keyed

around the traditional gendered role norms, the key theme was not about re-learning but rather, a continuous reflexive endeavour. There identified was a presence of sense of self, developed through active reflections upon the varied social contours or role codes including both the old and new. It revealed that they consciously self managed the lingering hold of the traditional line of inequalities and the risks of ideological precariousness as they made the personal choice to deviate from the role norms. Moreover, the analysis revealed the ways the self resisted the role pressure to conform and others' responses toward affecting the sense of self by being highly proactive in taking the ownership in the shaping of sense of self. Such capacity in turn aided them to even rationalise others' behaviours toward them as underpinned by 'jealousy', with which thus they could even affirm their belief that their differences are not something to be ashamed of but valued or even that it is better hence the notion of 'reverse-stima' earlier mentioned. It is also worthy to note that the anchored biography here involved the feminist education and the financial independence, both appearing to be critical for lone mothers to benefit from the late modern opportunity to step out of the traditional gender role norms.

In contrast, a group of never-married mothers resisted the self crises via the political resistance to norms or more specifically wholly rejecting and challenging the traditional demands – that is, through the strong self beliefs and in fact, ascription to the alternative hierarchy they successfully resisted the role pressure. Apart from the strong identity belief and their project of the self being the political vehicle, highlighted here was a theme of safe social milieu within which they maintained their livelihood that was organised around their identity beliefs, insulating the self for resisting the role pressure. In a stark contrast, the chapter also tentatively addressed the theme of young lone mothers who escaped issues of stigma through social resignation – a theme that drifted from the talk of 'doing' or 'managing' the precariously emancipated self.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

This concluding chapter returns to reflect on the key findings of the thesis specifically in relation to the question posed and aims presented at the beginning of the thesis, which involved:

- What can Japan, in particular women, expect from the contemporary situation and future?;
- To uncover lone mothers' knowledge and voices to contribute to the key feminist efforts of distinguishing between 'knowledge and prejudice', and making them a part of the ongoing reconsideration of the problems of lone mothers; and
- To understand how the state manages to keep its 'welfare state' commitments relatively small, or why so few lone mothers have entitlements from the state.

The chapter first focuses on revealing the various facets and mechanisms of the minimalist state that are uncovered in the thesis. Illuminated here will be the influences of the minimalist state in shaping the socio-structural circumstances of women. The in-depth summary here also ties into answering the central question in the last part of the chapter. At the same time, the first part of the chapter *implicitly* illustrates the contributions of the research in terms of other research aims of incorporating lone mothers' voices to expose the partiality involved in androcentric 'knowledge' that is so often wrongly presented and believed as universal truth, and contributes to reconsidering the problems of lone mothers. The chapter here highlights the variety of covert problems facing lone mothers. The sub-part following will focus on summarising the findings of the research in relation to the key agenda of reconsidering the problems of lone mothers – elicited will be the results that are keyed to the inclusion of lone mothers' voices in the research. The final part of the chapter considers an agenda for feminists in Japan to

effectively advance issues of lone mothers whilst illuminating the implications for the country's future.

Minimalist state revealed

The present thesis revealed various facets and mechanisms of the minimalist state of Japan. Here, I am bringing together the various features of the minimalist state that came to be spread across chapters. It also reflects on changes if any arising from the recent state-led renewal efforts around gender and public welfare. In addition, the consideration here illuminates the influences of minimalist state upon women's socio-structural circumstances. In short, my aim here involves eliciting the historic characters of the Japanese minimalist state, and contemporary trend for later reflection on the situation of women, and their prospects.

The Japanese state historically preferred a residual public welfare model that sat back-to-back with emphasis on 'self reliance' – which in Japan historically meant survival through mutual aid among family and community members. The historical analysis showed this *laissez fair* facet of minimalist state rests heavily upon the conditioning of people or molding Japanese minds as Garon (1998) called. In this regard, the thesis elicited the mobilisation of essentialising notions of filial piety, diligence, frugality and so forth, which were tightly intertwined with the wrongly naturalised gender based roles for people. Women were 'contracted in' to the modernistaion project as mothers and housewives via the Japanese feminine ideal of 'good wife, wise mother' (*Ryōsai Kenbo*). Though more often taken to reflect natural qualities or destinies of women than invented even to this date, this apparently 'norm' of womanhood was tightly regulated - formally recommended by the early modern Home Ministry and Ministry of Education, and strictly administered via the 'family system' (*Ie Seido*) of the Meiji Civil Code (*Minpō*). Through this, women were mobilised to sustain the minimalist state primarily as unpaid supporters of men, the family,

community and the nation - with emphasised roles as the 'good wife, wise mother' shifting accordingly with the timely needs of the modernisation project.

The post-war 1946 Constitution of Japan seemed to symbolise a substantial change to the minimalist state as it endorsed universal democratic rights of citizens, including the right to welfare, and the state's duty to guarantee that right. The Japanese state, however, resisted its 'last resort' welfare approach that rests on gendered familial mutual aid. This maintenance was keyed to: the survival of the principle of the old ideal of familial mutual aid and the 'family register' (*Koseki*) under the post-war Civil Code (*Minpō*); the establishment of the 1950 Recommendation Concerning the Social Security System (*Shakai Hoshō Seido Ni Kansuru Kankoku*); the establishment of the Livelihood Assistance (*Seikatsu Hogo*) as the 'last resort' safety-net; and the development of the 'model household' (*Moderu Setai*) in the post-war welfare administration that openly encouraged the formation of households with gender based roles.

The situation of public support for lone mothers mirrored the national climate with regard to gender and welfare. The thesis showed that although an idea of maternal protection (*Bosei Hogo*) was present around the initial development of public support for lone mothers, it was secondary in terms of the primary objective and concern - public support for lone mothers developed out of concern for child's welfare, and ultimately for the benefit of the nation. More specifically, with this in background came the 'one-body' ideology about mother and child (*Boshi Ittai*) formally endorsed to be the core axiom of public welfare for lone mother households under the 1964 Mother-Child Welfare Law (*Boshi Fukushi Hō*), the origin of the 1968 Mother-Child and Widow Welfare Law (*Boshi Oyobi Kafu Fukushi Hō*) - the most fundamental law of public welfare for lone mother households (*Boshi Fukushi*) to date. The 'one-body' ideology affirmed the original feature that is the "child focused maternal protection" – paving the way for

the ('good') mother identity based claim for welfare entitlements. Indeed, given that this is a heavily gender loaded identity, lone mothers in contact with the state to say the least became subject to gendered subjectivisation belie their citizenry rights for equality and welfare endorsed by the post-war Constitution. In addition to being the 'good mother', the analysis on white paper and policy discourses revealed that the 'male lack' became an integral part of lone mother's legitimacy.

To give more insights of the implications born by the particular gendered subjectivisation, the thesis showed that lone mothers' legitimacy became keyed to *being identified* as fatherless (in terms of the household) and as the Japanese feminine ideal of 'good wife, wise mother' or at least as being 'acceptable' in these terms, for instance, by "not appearing to be willingly challenging" the gender norms. That is, not merely the gendered access *per se* but lone mothers are faced with the gendered malleability of rights that is festured with highly impression or appearance based identification. The stigmatisation of lone mothers resulting from the gendered subjectivisation was another major way through which gendered subjectivisation problematised their access to entitlements. The thesis revealed through the white paper discourses that the social connotation of father is such that he is the socio-economic and psychological 'pillar' of the household and central to 'her normality' - the 'male lack' was thus a household deficiency and a mark of deviancy as a feminine subject.

The thesis recounted in-depth how the gendered subjectivisation and stigma operate to problematise lone motherhood as well as privatise problems that in turn helped to sustain the minimalist state. For instance, in chapter 5, the thesis showed how lone mothers can be subjected to peer policing or gendered disciplining to: remain as dependants of individual men or patriarchs "for the sake of children" or staying in marriage, especially "if she was to claim public welfare once divorced"; and bear the minimal welfare condition or even accept it as a self fulfilling experience as woman.

With dire needs, some lone mothers strategically negotiated with these gendered rationalities operating at the street level of public welfare, for instance, via playing the acceptable images of “looking grateful, desperate or downcast”. However, not everyone was able to pursue survival strategies the thesis revealed. One lone mother’s interview excerpt usefully illustrated how one’s agency to negotiate might be constrained or even demobilised hence in effect allowing the minimalist state to successfully pursue its residual approach:

“I was offended by some of the things she said. I was thinking why I have to put up with this lady saying funny things. ...But well, it is the work of the state bureaucracy (*Oyakusho Shigoto*)... I felt only relieved (*Tasukaru*) that there was something there. I felt ashamed (*Hazukashii*) that I had to receive something, which for people of my age means ‘a help from the above’ (*Okami No Osewa Ni Naru*)... It is a pitiful situation (*Kawaiso Na Jyokyo*). Nonetheless I was feeling grateful (*Arigatai*) about it. ... I would not have claimed it if it was not for my children anyway. I only received it temporarily when it was inevitable. It helped.” [Lm 11]

Her constrained agency was keyed to the *internalisation* of gender role norms to self sacrifice as well as the devalued identities and roles of lone mothers. Being engulfed in the deviant roles of the ‘needy claimant’ and gender role norm deviator, she ‘expects little’ from the state, accepting the minimalist state. The thesis also revealed how the ‘face saving’ act of passing, which norm ascribing lone mothers were prone to fall mirrored the way lone mothers tended to be neither willing nor fit to negotiate. Via passing, the stigma affected lone mothers strived to protect themselves from ‘loosing everything’ including the sense of self and social network, which they had built around the ‘good wife, wise mother’ identity and role. This survival strategy was a double-edged sword, however, as it involved immense costs of: not being able to effectively draw on one’s social

resources to relieve the problems arising from lone motherhood; and having to bear the sense of faking the self while battling with the consciousness that the self of the pre-stigma event is already gone. With these pressures, the devalued self was prone to developing psychological illness, leading the way to earning multiple stigmas – affirming the likely consequences of social retreat or withdrawal and the privatisation of problems.

Apart from the gendered access, the empirical chapter elicited features of the ‘state centred’ or despotic welfare delivery, which acted as serious logistical hurdles for lone mothers to access entitlements. These involved: the opening hours of local welfare offices that coincided with the typical office hours; multiple visit requirements to claim entitlements; and inappropriate facilitation of access to information with regard to public welfare that is available. In addition, the despotic state also surfaced in lone mothers’ accounts on the absence of policy attention for ‘up-skilling’ to improve their career prospects at all levels. Lone mothers wanted ‘viable work’, not ‘any work’ – highlighted was the glimpse of the minimalist state that delivers with *low expectations*, resulting in work measures that do not effectively serve lone mothers’ varied needs and concerns.

The recent state-led ‘renewal’ efforts that came with high modern expressions of equality and welfare ethos presented hope that epochal shifts may be occurring in Japan’s gender culture and public welfare hence also changes made to the situations of lone mothers. The social security reforms for instance involved a call for the ‘universalisation’ of public welfare and ‘user oriented’ welfare provision, and the eye-catching ‘gender-equal society’ (*Danjyo Kyōdō Sankaku Shakai*) promised gender-equal *opportunities* versus equality as assimilation of differences to male standards. The thesis revealed, however, the modern legislative discourses of the top level state cannot be taken at the face value.

The universal notion of public welfare alone illusively suggests an end of

the minimalist era as it endorses that ‘public welfare is for everyone’, setting a trend towards normalisation of public welfare. A careful evaluation however revealed that it came with emphasis on ‘shared needs’ and a rhetoric of “social fairness of cost sharing” – these in turn set a trend towards devaluation of ‘different needs’, and moreover *indiscriminate cost-sharing* irrespective of age, physical capabilities, and so forth. That is, the ‘universal’ notion of public welfare in Japan did not manifest itself to mean indiscriminate coverage versus the means tested. It set about a welcome trend towards the ‘user oriented’ welfare versus one of the despotic, and normalisation of claimants for public welfare *at least in scripts*. But these came at a phenomenal cost - the contradictory trend of treating ‘everyone the same’ in both the needs and payment terms *when the pace of socio-structural amendments by far lag behind the scripted normality* in terms of the actual equal opportunities afforded. That is, unveiled was the cost-containment policy of the state that allows the problems of the socially disadvantaged to exacerbate for the national budgetary objective.

The ‘gender-equal society’ concept took up issues of women’s human rights and structural injustice seriously, and dispelled all common trends of masculinising notion of equality and merely distributional ideal of justice. The concept of equality finally moved beyond the thinking in terms of ‘women’s issues’, advocating the transcendence of gender based roles both by men and women. The society finally found a state-led legal code that articulated and affirmed the constitutional principles of treating people as equal citizens. The thesis, however, illuminated that the initiative is bound up with the modern and nostalgia. For one thing, it showed that the ‘gender-equal society’ although with its highly detraditionalised facets is quite openly a bio-political prescription among other means to tackle the rising cost of caring born by the coming of the ‘super-aged’ society underpinned by the rapidly greying demography. The thesis however acknowledged, at least in scripts, there has been a remarkable shift in its bio-political strategy – moving on from the previous despotic strategy of

technologising the self of women into the baby bearer and rearer, it now *entices* women to see forming families and having children as *valued goals* by transforming the socio-structural order of Japan into one that accords to the ‘gender-equal society’ ideal, promising women the emancipation from their gendered positions, and gender-equal opportunities to pursue life choices and styles regardless of being married, bearing or rearing.

Nevertheless, formal policies are far from being adjusted to the ‘gender-equal’ principles – ‘one-body’ ideology about the mother and child is left untouched for instance. Other policies such as the Child Rearing Fund (*Yōiku Hi*) and Child Rearing Benefit (*Jidō Fuyō Teate*) that subject lone mothers to the gendered positions in accessing entitlements in more subtle ways also remain to be evaluated. The thesis also identified serious weakness of the reforms in the way: the responsibility with regard to the welfare administration involving the budget, and formulation as well as the implementation of measures became relocated from the central to lower levels of the state bureaucracy at the same time when the epochal changes came to be endorsed at the top level formal discourses; and many of the legislated changes were introduced as the ‘guideline for change’ (*Doryoku Gimu*), resulting in the minimal ‘take-up’ rate of policies. Similar to the case of the welfare reform thus there exists a wide gap in the scripted change towards equal opportunity and the actual situation. Behind the front-screen changes, that is, the minimalist state lingers.

The changes made to the positions of lone mothers in the recent reform era faithfully reflected such state of precarious transformation. They became identified as one variant of many lifestyles at least in the top level formal discourses. The normalising trend was set about also given the shift to less stigmatic ‘needs based’ access to entitlements. In addition, a wide aspect of lone mothers’ work problems began to receive policy attention including the demand side of lone mothers’ employment issues that contrasted with the previous trend of focusing thoroughly on “lone mothers as the problems”,

treating them as the subject to be rehabilitated. The role of absent fathers also finally came to receive policy attention, rather than the prior singular scrutiny over the mother's role. However, the normalised lone mothers in script are becoming deprived of support while efforts to amend the socio-structural inequalities hardly match the unprecedented speed at which social support for lone mothers (as little there was) is withdrawn. The policy emphasis is shifting to the more generalised child and family care services, and the labour market as well as the role of the absent father – *although either the labour market or absent father is yet ensured to be a viable and reliable means of financial relief for lone mothers.*

The street level observation of public welfare also faithfully illuminated “the new world let loose” resulting from the precarious modernisation. The thesis recounted contested effects of the contradictory cultural standards resisting in formal legal framework, and the under-resourced policies overlaid onto traditional problems of poorly resourced work environment of welfare workers at the street level. The randomness in the kind of services that are actually made available and being delivered at the street level of public welfare resulted from these circumstances. The thesis observed how the novelty of recent reforms or actual delivery of formal policies heavily relies on the personal capacity and initiative of frontline workers who are hardly said to be well supported, protected or regulated.

At one end of the spectrum, facilities struggled to reflect any interpretations of the law, and rather engaged in *refracting* formal policies – the informal role coping strategies such as managing the in-take and nature of cases to be dealt accordingly with realities with regard to the structural capacity of the facility. That is, not only people fall through the gaps in the law itself but also its adoption. Even in the discourses of progressive workers, the minimalist profile of the state lingered. Most crudely, this was shown in the way they are having to accept that in the end, the best they can hope for in terms of lone mothers' route out of public welfare rested with the

‘minimalist expectation’ of finding ‘any work’ or ‘self reliance’ through re-marriage.

Finally, the contemporary minimalist state also had a traditional manifestation in the way workers struggled to provide the bottom-line offer of help to literally help welfare claimants survive the day. The frontline workers struggled to manage the ‘unofficial’ though critical social work of helping those who fall through programmed formats of law to provide the actual ‘last resort’ function of public welfare. Here, one worker’s verdict about the varied abilities to maintain a certain standard of living with a bundle of goods was revealing of traditional ‘blind spot’ in thinking about poverty and one’s welfare – which in recent decades, prominent scholars such as Nussbaum and Sen (1993) with the ‘capabilities approach’ to understanding poverty, and Sen (1990) the notion that freedoms are constitutive parts of justice hence the significance of looking into one’s varied ability across the socio-spatial axis of gender, age and so forth in converting a bundle of goods into actual freedoms, have much contributed to filling the gap. The minimalist concern or more appropriately the neglect of understanding poverty, and translating it to measures was thus another way, which the minimalist state manifested itself.

Prior to turning to recast the analysis of the thesis around the problems of lone mothers, it is worth making a note of the needs of frontline welfare workers. Although thinking about welfare workers admittedly lies outside the scope of the present thesis, the research uncovered the need to look deeper into ways of relieving their needs – an important consideration both for the workers and consumers of public welfare. The poorly resourced work environment of welfare workers is one requiring urgent attention – an issue that should be advanced in relation to the significant role played by them both in terms of actualising the progressive reforms, and the ‘unofficial’ work of relieving the informal struggles of people to survive.

What is problematic about lone motherhood?

The incorporation of lone mothers' voices afforded the research insight into the problems of lone mothers, which in fact became identified in my research as "problems of *doing the self* as a lone mother in Japan" – which highlighted their problems of having to deal with being subjectivised into the mother, and gender norm deviator in the precariously modernising Japan. The gendered social subjectivisation, the precarious changes occurring in the way they are socially subjectivised, and their responses formed key parts of analysis with which the thesis sought to unveil realities of lone motherhood as lived and experienced by lone mothers in Japan – ones that are not readily conveyed by the simplistic structural victimisation or individualistic demonisation approaches. Beyond merely structural or internal, the thesis sought to illuminate the sense of self, rationalities, reflexivity, ability to negotiate social identities and roles, and indeed self torments of lone mothers intertwined with socio-structural circumstances.

In terms of the socio-structural situations facing lone mothers in Japan, the thesis highlighted the lingering traditional gendered contours of social life in Japan as well as the precarious transformation – which are taken up again in the earlier part of this chapter. Along with the former, the latter is a significant issue that needs careful monitoring. The situation arising where there is a widening gap in *the staged* social situations and the actual realities facing lone mothers is likely to exacerbate unfair judgments and treatments to which lone mothers are prone to be subjected. The multi-scalar analysis also involved looking into the problems of lone mothers as social actors intertwined with socio-structural circumstances. Here, the thesis examined and expressed their problems as having to live up to the role norm ideal of the 'good mother' and managing the 'spoilt self' as gender role norm deviator. The problems were recounted in multifarious terms of the role tension, engulfment, passing, and moreover the sense of losing the self, with the detraditionalised pressure to be reflexive without matching

socio-structural redress, adding on to their self torments. In hindsight, Hochschild's (1983) idea of 'emotional labour', a self constrictive work of bridging the gap between "the way one honestly feels" and the way one senses what is socially expected or socially appropriate display of self, might have been usefully mobilised to highlight a part of the problems of doing the self as lone mother in Japan that is extremely covert though significant. It is worthy to note, however, that the depth of self torment that was uncovered in the research went beyond this - it had an element of bridging the gap *internally* as troubled lone mothers internalised role norms, though to a varying extent. The habituated state of self repression indeed allowed the sense of self to be 'taken over' by social dictations, as it deprived the self to feel and look into the self as the self really is and to nurture a lifestyle that could flexibly taken on possibilities that are other than being the 'good wife, wise mother'.

Amending the socio-structural circumstances of lone mothers is an important social agenda, which the chapter will address next. At the personal level, the research found that 'minding the gap' in the way one is socially subjectivised and the way "the self really feels" from early stages in life is a significant issue in preventing the various problems of lone mothers from arising. To put more strongly, taking an active ownership in the project of self both in terms of the sense of self, and in nurturing one's micro-geographical settings was shown to be an important part of the effort here. Especially in later stages of life this is "easier said than done" so the thesis illustrated. The self enquiry engagements, aided by guideposts such as counseling and feminists initiatives can be of a significant help, however, in relieving some parts of the problems of lone mothers who are wedged in gender based roles. These social resources need to be enriched and professionalised.

It must be emphasised, however, that lone mothers' problems stretch beyond this that can be worked upon at the personal level – the self enquiry

engagements can help partially but the roots of their problems also rest elsewhere, in the labour market and in the social roles ascribed to and performed by men, for instance. The chapter now turns to illuminate the wider scope of their problems, and deal with injustice outwardly in terms of the collective efforts of feminists and others.

Final reflection

The thesis highlighted that recent state-led renewal efforts around gender and welfare are not solely or even primarily about bringing justice for women and the socially marginalised others. Moreover, in hindsight, I suggest the ‘gender-equal society’ initiative as is pursued currently is not even serious about nurturing the birth rate. Rather, with the emphasised *rhetoric* of choice, it is fitting perfectly to the strong push for the universal worker model that is explicit under the welfare reforms – another delusive policy that is so far emerging to be a short-termist and cost-containment initiative as recounted earlier.

The detraditionalising forces will continue to exert influences both through changes in domestic conditions and external global processes - however bounded the Japanese state is with nostalgia, that is. The trend is already set. Though being reluctant in fully embracing, the bold steps taken by the Japanese state to mobilise just ethos and strategies of gender equality are revealing of the global influences – the use of these that are advanced by modern global authorities mirrors the intention of the Japanese state to *live up to its face* as a modern just state of the global community. Moreover, it is an open secret that the Japanese mixed capitalist economy, a locally adjusted capitalism (see Gibson-Graham, 1996) that relies on labour and lives that are very much gendered, needs updating - the gendered familial care model is increasingly unfit to ‘cheaply’ absorb the nation’s needs for the ‘labour of love’, in the face of rapid changes in demography and family formation hence the rising cost of healthcare, putting pressure on the

country's already creaking public finances that is notoriously badly managed.

Where now for Japan, and women? The strong push for the universal worker model can be a blessing in disguise in fact – if it is affirmed accordingly with the ‘gender-equal society’ principles. The politico-economic interest of maintaining the international face as modern state and the budgetary concern alone suggest it is in the interests of the Japanese state to do so. For one thing, the Janus-faced reforms festured with points of disconnects, contradictions, and inconsistent policies as elicited earlier readily illustrate the ease at which its modern international face can be put in jeopardy. By affirming its ‘gender-equal society’ principles in all policies, the Japanese state will help itself to ensure the ideal face to be kept on the international screen. In addition, domestically, the affirmation of universal worker model as a genuinely gender-equal initiative is an epochal overhaul necessary to ensure the long-term socio-economic viability of the nation. If work means ‘viable work’ for all groups of people underpinned by appropriate socio-structural redress thus affording equal opportunities for groups of people with differences, the universal worker model can indeed pave the way for Japan to enjoy socio-economic vibrancy that can positively influence GDP and tentatively even implicate in youthful aging for all groups – opening up a sustainable way to relieve the national budgetary problem whilst providing women and others with better choice in life.

This is thus a *prima* time for Japanese feminists and others to advance a just society, which is defined in my thesis admittedly in a simplistic term – where equal *opportunities* are afforded to various groups of people via amendments to structural injustice. It is worthy to note here that the issue of what the territory of justice constitutes requires further discussion in nurturing a just society. With a history of modernisation project strongly underpinned by a line of thinking that assumes “development as economic growth”, with ramifications for the narrowly conceived notions about

poverty and justice, alternative perspectives should be addressed, for instance, those advanced by Nussbaum and Sen (1993) and Sen (1990) as suggested earlier.

Returning to my claim on the timeliness of fostering a just society, I suggest, the workable and useful frameworks to push for justice for women (and the socially marginalised others) are already set out by the Japanese state such as the ‘gender-equal society’ measure and universal worker model. There also exists a sound opportunity to build consensus with the Japanese state – as outlined above, the new codes of practices and model can be affirmed to advance both the interests of the socially disadvantaged, and the concerns of the Japanese state. One part of the two key tasks to leverage the contemporary situation involves exposing and politicising contradictions and disconnects in and around gender and welfare initiatives of the Japanese state in recent years, while leveraging new legal codes and emphasis on the universal worker model to advance equal opportunities for all groups. Another part involves efforts to analyse and politicise how a just society keyed upon the universal worker model that is affirming of gender-equal principles can indeed fulfill the economic and budgetary interests of the Japanese state, as well as meet its concern to maintain the international face that is intertwined with the interest to maintain its politico-economic influence in the global community.

The discussion here is admittedly an overture to fully evaluate the central question posed in the thesis. I suggest the progress of these efforts to firmly guide the interests of the Japanese state to be met with a just society that in itself needs developing illuminates the future prospect of lone mothers and more broadly women in Japan, and the country.

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Table 2.1: The International Comparison of Social Expenditures by Component (in ratios to GDP and NI, for 2001)

	Japan		The United Kingdom		Sweden	
	(%GDP)	(%NI)	(%GDP)	(%NI)	(%GDP)	(%NI)
Family	0.60	0.82	2.23	2.88	2.92	4.10
Elderly	7.92	10.77	8.59	11.10	9.21	12.95
Bereaved family	1.22	1.66	0.59	0.76	0.62	0.87
Public assistance & other	0.21	0.28	0.19	0.24	0.62	0.88
Healthcare	6.09	8.29	6.12	7.92	7.4	10.44
Active labour market policies	0.23	0.31	0.35	0.45	1.36	1.91
Unemployment	0.50	0.68	0.27	0.36	0.96	1.34
Disability, occupational accident, accident & sickness	0.67	0.91	2.56	3.31	5.76	8.10
Housing	*	*	1.45	1.88	0.64	0.89
Total	17.44	23.72	22.35	28.90	29.50	41.48

Source: Adopted from 'Seisaku Bunya Betsu Shakai Shishutsu No Tai Kokumin Shotokuhi No Kokusai Hikaku' & 'Seisaku Bunya Betsu Shakai Shishutsu No Tai Tai Kokunai Sōseisanhi No Kokusai Hikaku', *Heisei 15-nendo Shakai Hoshō Kyūfui*, National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (2005).

Note: The original data is taken from the OECD Social Expenditure Database 2004 except for the Japanese data, which is prepared by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research in accordance with the criterion used in the 'OECD Social Expenditure Database'.

Table 2.2: The International Comparison of Take-up Rates of Public Assistance for One Parents (for 1992)

Country	Name of the Public Assistance	%Take-up rate (of one parents)
Japan	Livelihood Assistance	12
The United States	Aid to Families with Dependent Children; Food stamps	49
The United Kingdom	Income Support	70
Germany	<i>Sozialhilfe</i>	10
France	<i>Revenu Minimum d'Insertion; Allocation de Parent Isole</i>	37
Sweden	Social Assistance	33 (1994)

Source: Adopted from Bradshaw *et al.* (1996), pp. 40-41.

Note:

1. The public assistance dealt here involves the key public assistance (of the minimum income support sort) that can be used by one parent.
2. The figure for France involves the recipients with children aged 0-17 for RIM or API (1993).

Table 2.3: The Contact Rate of Public Welfares by Lone Mothers (for 2003)

	%Used/ using	%Not used/ using	%Desire to use in future
Welfare Office (<i>Fukushi Jimusho</i>)	[26.4] 21.0	[73.6] 79.0	[43.2] 33.7
Local information desk for welfare (<i>Shi/Chō/Son Fukushi Kankei Madoguchi</i>)	[34.6] 30.9	[65.4] 69.1	[45.8] 36.8
Child Advisory Centre (<i>Jidō Sōdan Jo</i>)	[7.4] 8.7	[92.1] 91.3	[30.8] 28.3
Family-Child Advisory Room (<i>Katei Jidō Sōdan Jo</i>)	[3.8] 3.3	[96.2] 96.7	[31.7] 29.2
Mother-Child Self Reliant Assistant (<i>Boshi Jiritsu Shien In</i>)	[10.2] 10.7	[89.8] 89.3	[34.6] 35.2
Women Advisory Centre (<i>Fujin Sōdan Jo</i>)	[2.3] 2.5	[97.7] 97.5	[35.7] 29.0
Local/Child Welfare Commissioner (<i>Minsei/Jidō Iin</i>)	[19.6] 17.8	[80.4] 82.2	[29.8] 23.0
Mother-Child Welfare Loans (<i>Boshi Fukushi Shikin</i>)	[16.9] 10.5	[83.1] 89.5	[53.9] 51.9
Family Livelihood Assistant (dispatch service) (<i>Katei Seikatsu Shien In</i>)	[1.6] 0.6	[98.4] 99.4	[25.1] 18.2
Mother-Child Welfare Centre (<i>Boshi Fukushi Sentā</i>)	[4.3] 10.2	[95.7] 89.8	[33.3] 33.2
Mother-Child Livelihood Assistance Facility (<i>Boshi Seikatsu Shien Shisetsu</i>)	[1.6] 3.0	[98.4] 97.0	[12.0] 13.6
Public Job Centre (<i>Kōkyō Shokugyō Antei Jo</i>)	[35.8] 39.2	[64.2] 60.8	[42.1] 46.0
Public Employment Skills Development Facility (<i>Kōkyō Shokugyō Nōryoku Kaihatsu Shisetsu</i>)	[1.8] 4.5	[97.2] 95.5	[38.7] 38.9
Lone Mother Households etc. Employment/Self Reliance Centre Project (<i>Boshi Katei Tō Shūgyō/Jiritsu Shien Sentā Jigyō</i>)	* 1.0	* 99.0	* 37.1
Self Reliance Assistance Education and Training Benefits Programme (<i>Jiritsu Shien Kyōiku Kunren Kyūfu Kin Jigyō</i>)	* 0.6	* 99.4	* 38.2
Advanced Skills Training Facilitation Benefits Programme (<i>Kōtō Ginō Kunren Sokushin Hi Jigyō</i>)	* 0.2	* 99.8	* 36.5

Source: Adopted from 'Fukushi Kankei No Kōteki Seido Tō No Riyō Jyōkyō', the 2003 *National Survey on Lone Mother Households etc. Debrief Report* (Zenkoku Boshi Setai Tō Chōsa Kekka Hōkoku), Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2005).

Note:

1. The base population = 1,854 lone mother households randomly chosen (see <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/houdou/2005/01/h0119-1.html>)
2. The upper figure in the bracket is taken from the 1998 survey and the lower from the 2003 survey.
3. Multiple answers allowed.

Table 2.4: The Comparison of the Average Annual Income of Lone Mother Households and Lone Father Households (in million yen, for 2003)

	Lone mother households	Lone father households
Average number of the household member	3.36 persons	3.97
Average income [income from paid work]	2.12 [1.62]	3.90 [3.20]
Average income per household member	0.63	0.98

Source: Adopted from ‘Heisei 14-nen No Nenkan Shunyū Jyōkyō’, *the 2003 National Survey on Lone Mother Households etc. Debrief Report* (Zenkoku Boshi Setai Tō Chōsa Kekka Hōkoku), Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2005).

Note: The average annual income is the addition of all earnings, including public welfares, after-tax pay, the child rearing fund paid by the absent parent, money sent by parents, house/land rent collected and so forth.

Table 2.5: The Poverty Rate (50 percent-level of the average income) by Household Forms

Category	%Poverty rate
Single, aged under 55	7.6
Single, aged over 65	30.0
Married household (with one aged over 65)	13.1
Household with the elderly, aged over 65 (other than the 3 types in above)	11.0
Married couple + child(ren), aged under 18	6.5
One parent + child(ren), aged under 18	22.5
Total	8.2

Source: From Hoshino • Iwata and others (1994), pp. 52-53.

Note: The rates are calculated on the basis of the 1989 National Survey of Family Income and Expenditure (Zenkoku Shōhi Jittai Chōsa).

Table 2.6: The Average Worker's Wage Profile (for 2004)

	Average age (years old)	Average years of continuous employment (years)	Routinely paid cash wage (in thousand yen)	Scheduled cash earnings (in thousand yen)	Special earnings (annual bonus etc.) (in thousand yen)
Total	40.4	12.1	330.2	301.6	891.6
Women	38.3	9.0	241.7	225.6	601.8
Men	41.3	13.4	367.7	333.9	1,014.6

Source: From 'Ippan Rōdōsha No Chingin Jittai', the 2004 Basic Survey on Wage Structure (Chingin Kōzō Kihon Tōkei Chōsa), Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2005).

Table 2.7: The Change in the Proportion of Women in Management

Year	% Women in management	% Women at the manager level (Bucho)	% Women at the section chief level (Kacho)	% Women at the sub-section chief level (Kakaricho)
1966	4.2	*	*	*
1976	5.6	0.7	1.3	2.6
1986	7.2	1.1	1.7	3.8
1996	8.9	1.4	3.1	7.3
2003	9.9	3.1	4.6	9.4

Source: From Labour Force Survey (Rōdoryoku Chōsa), Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications; Wage Structure Basic Statistics Survey (Chingin Kōzō Kihon Tōkei Chōsa), Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

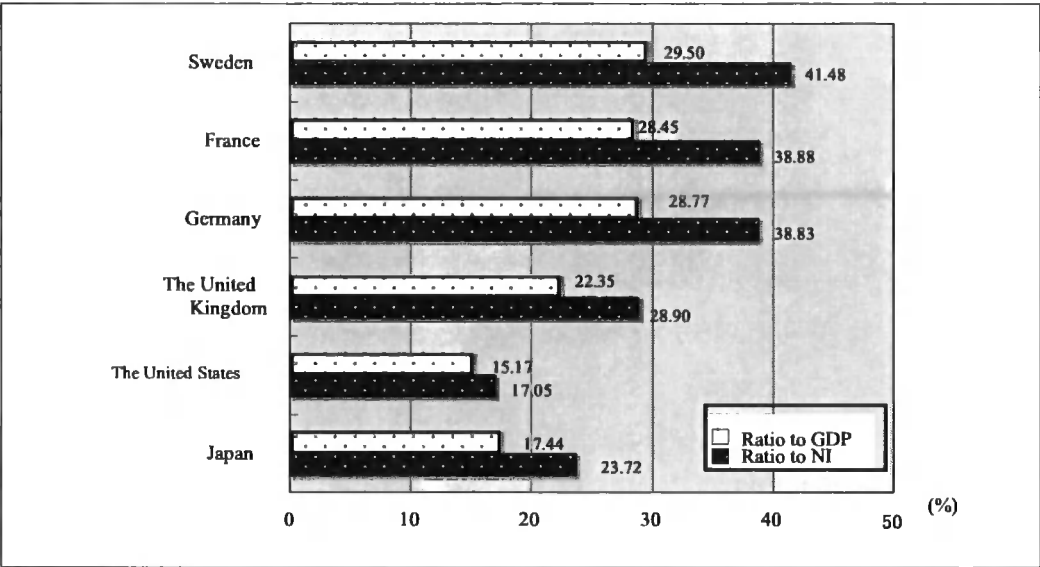
Table 2.8: The Employment Situations of Lone Mothers (for 1998 and 2003)

Category	1998	2003
In employment	84.9	83.0
Self-employed	5.7	4.2
Full-time	50.7	39.2
Temporal/ Part-time	38.3	49.0
Temp work	*	4.4
Work in family's business	*	1.5
Other	5.3	1.7
Not in employment	13.6	16.7

Source: Adopted from ‘Haha No Shyūgyō Jyōkyō’, the 2003 National Survey on Lone Mother Households etc. Debrief Report (Zenkoku Boshi Setai Tō Chōsa Kekka Hōkoku), Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2005).

Note: The figures are shown in percentage.

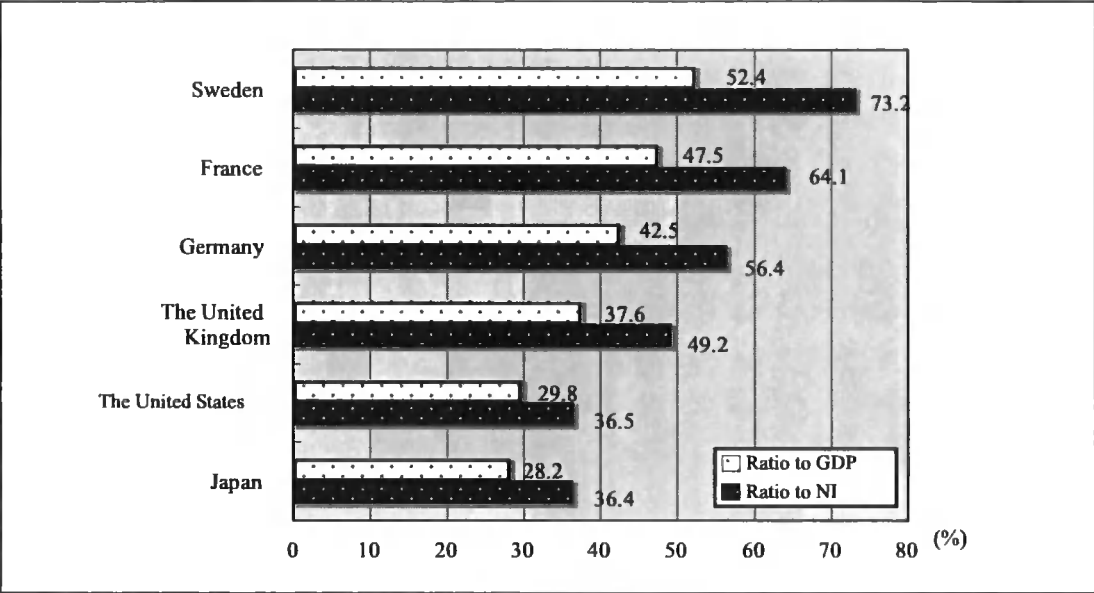
Figure 2.1: The International Comparison of Social Expenditures (in ratios to GDP and NI, for 2001)



Source: Adopted from ‘Shakai Shishutsu No Tai Kokumin Shotokuhi Oyobi Tai Kokunai Sōseisanhi no Kokusai Hikaku’, Heisei 15-nendo Shakai Hoshō Kyūfuhi, National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (2005).

Note: The original data is taken from the OCED Social Expenditure Database 2004 except for the Japanese, which is prepared by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research in accordance with the definition of the ‘OECD Social Expenditure Database’.

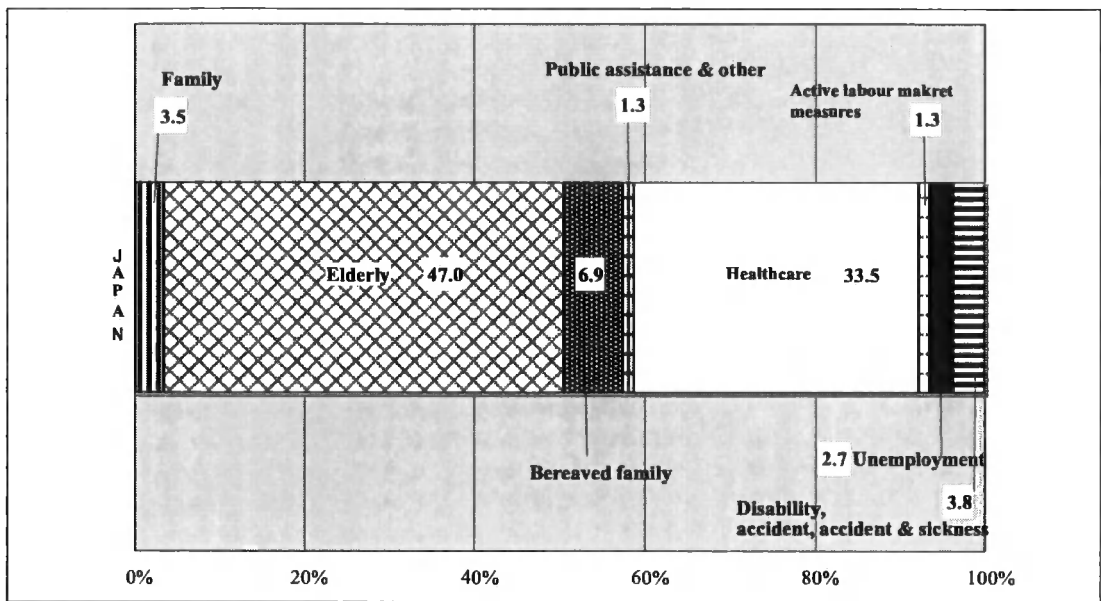
**Figure 2.2: The International Comparison of Social Security Burdens
(in ratios to GDP and NI, for 1996)**



Source: Adopted from 'International Comparison of Tax and Social Security Burdens', *Annual Reports on Health and Welfare 1998-1999 Social Security and National Life*, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

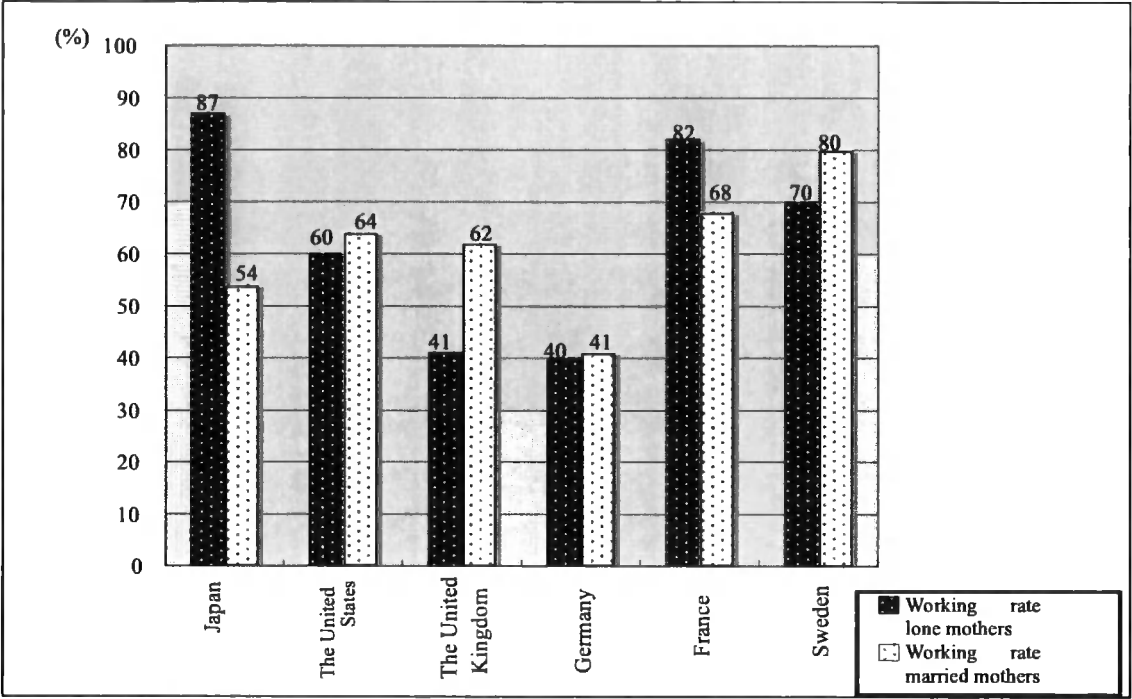
Note: The national burden rate is a ratio of taxation and social security burdens (social insurance premiums) to the gross domestic product or national income.

Figure 2.3: The Components of Japan's Social Expenditure (for 2002)



Source: Adopted from 'Nihon No Shakai Shishutsu No Sui', *Heisei 15-nendo Shakai Hoshō Kyūfui*, National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (2005).
Note: The data is compiled in accordance with the criterion used in the 'OECD Social Expenditure Database'.

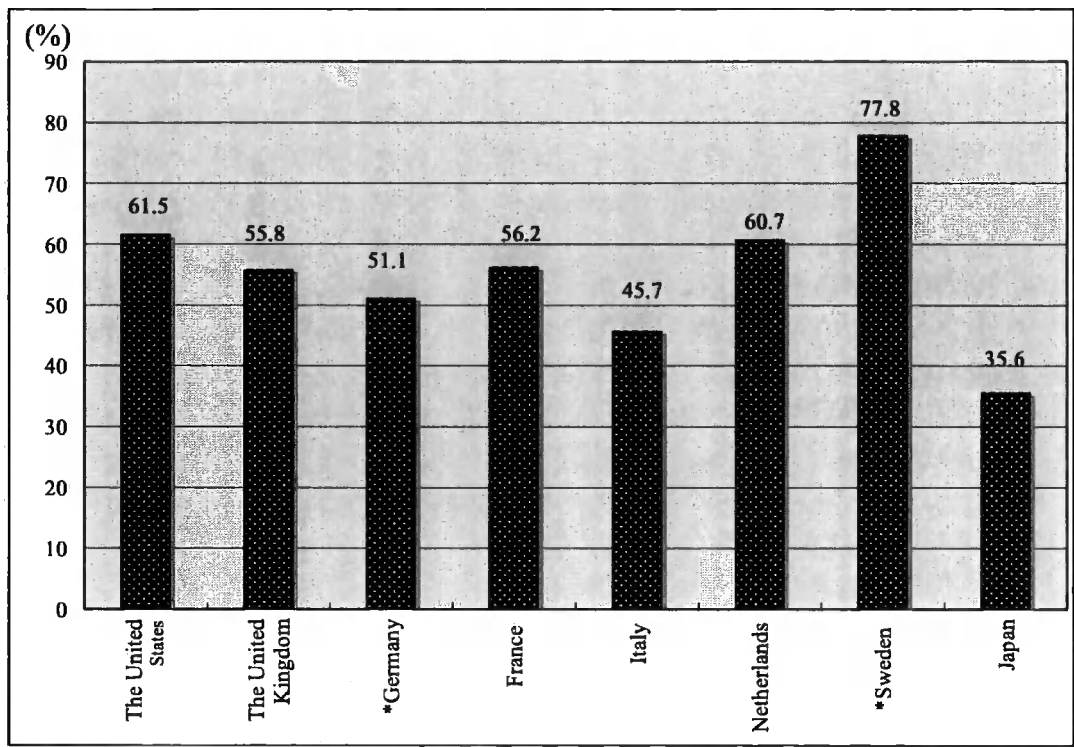
Figure 2.4: The International Comparison of Lone Mothers' Employment Participation Rates



Source: Adopted from 'Koyō Patan No Ruikei', *Kakei Keizai Kenkyū* No. 33, Bradshaw and Tsubohashi (1997).

Note: The figure for Japan reflects the employment participation rate (of 1993) that includes people who are self-employed and involved in family business.

Figure 2.5: The International Comparison on the Employment Participation Rate of Mothers with Child(ren) under 6-years of Age (for 1999)



Source: Adopted from ‘*Rokusai Miman No Ko O Motsu Haha No Shugyō Ritsu No Kokusai Hikaku*’, the 2004 Basic Survey on Wage Structure (*Chingin Kōzō Kihon Tōkei Chōsa*), Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2005).

Note:

1. The figure for Japan is taken from the Detailed Report on Workforce Survey (*Rōdoryoku Chōsa Shousai Shukei*), Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications; the figures for other countries are taken from the OECD “Employment Outlook 2001”.
2. The figures of countries with asterisks do not necessarily correspond to the statistic of 1999.
3. The research subjects involve: wives of 25-54 years of age (Japan); women of 25-54 years of age (other countries).

Table 4.1: The Implementation Rate with regard to the Newly Introduced Employment Related Projects

Project type	Prefecture Base population (N) = 47	Designated city N = 13	Designated city equivalents N = 35	Orginary city, town & villages with the welfare office N = 658	Total take-up rate N = 753
[1]	83.0	61.5	31.4	---	61.1
[2]	74.5	7.7	17.1	17.6	21.0
[3]	61.7	7.7	17.1	13.8	16.9
[4]	40.4	7.7	5.7	8.5	10.4

Source: Adopted from *Heisei 15-Nendo Ni Okeru Boshi Katei No Haha No Shūgyō No Shien Ni Kansuru Shisaku No Jisshi No Jyōkyō Hōkoku*, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2003), [submitted to the 159th National Diet (Ordinary)]

Note:

1. Numbers are correct as of January 2004.

2. Figures are in ‘% delivering the project’.

Key – Project type:

[1] Employment/ Self-Reliance Assistance Centre Project for Lone Mother Household *etc.*

[2] Vocational Self-Reliance Assistance Benefit

[3] Advanced Skills Training Promotion Fund

[4] Regular Employment Conversion Incentive Payment

Appendix B: Key Legislations & Public Welfare Services Available for Lone Mother Households

Constitution of Japan (effective since 1947):

Article 13:

All of the people shall be respected as individuals. Their right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness shall, to the extent that it does not interfere with the public welfare, be the supreme consideration in legislation and in other governmental affairs.

Article 14:

All of the people are equal under the law and there shall be no discrimination in political, economic or social relations because of race, creed, sex, social status or family origin. (2) Peers and peerage shall not be recognized. (3) No privilege shall accompany any award of honor, decoration or any distinction, nor shall any such award be valid beyond the lifetime of the individual who now holds or hereafter may receive it.

Article 24:

(1) Marriage shall be based only on the mutual consent of both sexes and it shall be maintained through mutual cooperation with the equal rights of husband and wife as a basis. (2) With regard to choice of spouse, property rights, inheritance, choice of domicile, divorce and other matters pertaining to marriage and the family, laws shall be enacted from the standpoint of individual dignity and the essential equality of the sexes.

Article 25:

All the people shall have the right to maintain the minimum standards of wholesome and cultural living. In all spheres of life, the state shall use its endeavours for the promotion and extension of social welfare and security, and of public health.

Mother-Child and Widow Welfare Law (*Boshi Oyobi Kafu Fukushi Hō*):

The major law governing the public welfare for lone mothers, the Mother-Child and Widow Welfare Law (*Boshi oyobi Kafu Fukushi Hō*) defines the subjects of the law to be the ‘female without a spouse’, ‘child’, ‘widow’ and also the ‘mother-child welfare organisations’:

- The ‘female without a spouse’ is a person who has become single through bereavement with her spouse (includes the female who is in the same situation and has had a *de facto* married life) and who is in the equivalent conditions as the female: 1) who has divorced and is not currently married; 2) with a missing spouse whose death or life cannot be identified; 3) who has been abandoned by the spouse; 4) who is unsupported due to the spouse residing in abroad; 5) whose spouse has been unable to work for a long period of time due to the spouse’s physical or mental disability; and 6) who by the government decree defined as being comparable to the fore-mentioned definitions given. The last definition equates to: 1) the female who is unsupported due to a spouse being imprisoned for a long period of time; and 2) the female who has become the mother without marriage and who is currently unmarried.
- The ‘child’ is a person under the age of 20 years.
- The ‘widow’ is a female without a spouse and who has in the past supported a child without a spouse accordingly with the definition under the Article 877 of the Civil Code.
- The ‘mother-child organisation’ is defined as the social welfare foundation or a foundation set by the rule under the Article 34 of this constitution that aims to enhance the welfare of the widow and a female without a spouse who is supporting a child in accordance with the definitions under the Article 877 of the Civil Code.

Recent Legislative Reforms

The recent changes (2003~2004) to the public welfare available for lone mothers involved the Law on Partial Amendments to the Mother-Child and Widow Welfare etc. (*Boshi Oyobi Kafu Fukushi Hō Tō No Ichibu O Kaisei Suru Hōritsu*). Established on November 22nd 2002 (effected on April 1st 2003) (thereafter referred to as the '2002 Legislation' in this Appendix), a series of legislations have been amended under this law with the aim of advancing the state-led 'self-reliant assistance' (*Jiritsu Shien*) measure for lone mother households and the equivalent in a holistic manner. These legislations included: 1) the Mother-Child and Widow Welfare Law (*Boshi Oyobi Kafu Fukushi Hō*); 2) the Child Rearing Allowance Law (*Jidō Fuyō Teate Hō*); 3) the Child Welfare Law (*Jidō Fukushi Hō*); and 4) the Social Welfare Law (*Shakai Fukushi Hō*). The '2002 Legislation' assigned the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare to define the basic guideline concerning the measure to improve and stabilise the livelihood of lone mother households and widows and local authorities to formulate the Self-Reliance Promotional Plan (*Jiritsu Sokushin Keikaku*) accordingly with the guideline of the state. Much commitment is encouraged on the part of local governments as their roles are becoming increasingly important for the effective implementation of measures for lone mother households and widows.

Key Public Welfare Services/Initiatives Relevant for the welfare of Lone Mother Households

Measures related to the financial assistance:

- Mother-Child Welfare Fund Loans (*Boshi Fukushi Kashitsuke Kin*):
These loans are provided in order to assist the subjects of the Mother-Child and Widow Welfare Law for financially self-reliant and

motivated livelihood, and enhance the welfare of the dependent child. Previously only loaned to the mother of lone mother households, those that aim to assist the child can now be loaned by the child him/herself. In such case, the mother of the child can become the warrantor for the loan hence eliminating the problem of finding the third-person warrantor. In addition, the loaner is now entitled to partial exemption for the repayment of the loan if s/he is unable to repay the loan for a reason of financial difficulty or other reasons specified by the government decree. Upper limits of several loans have been uplifted. Also, to counter for potential payment reductions concerning the Child Rearing Allowance with the onset of the new regime introduced in August 2002, the interest free loan, called the Special Child Rearing Fund (*Tokubetsu Jidō Fuyō Shikin*) became available. The different types of the available loans are shown in Table B.1 at the end of the current Appendix.

- Child Rearing Allowance (*Jidō Fuyō Teate*): Previously dealt by the municipal governments, the city-level governments have become responsible for the administration of this allowance since August 2002. With a view of stabilising the drastic change in one's livelihood caused by such events as divorce and re-evaluating the Child Rearing Allowance into a measure that truly facilitates the self-reliance of lone mother households, a new measure has been introduced to refocus the payment in a defined period immediately after one's divorce. The new measure involves the introduction of reduced rate of payment after the period in receipt of the allowance exceeds the duration of 5 years. Notably, the imposition of such measure is to be applied with a special discretion given to cases of lone mother households that have difficulty in attaining independence for reasons of ill-health, disability and having the dependent infant below the age of 3. The actual deduction in payments is to start from the year 2008. The proportion to be deducted is to be defined by the forthcoming government decree that is to be

made on the premise of evaluation concerning the progress of various assistance measures regarding child rearing, livelihood, employment, finance and the attainment of the Child Rearing Fund (*Yōiku Hi*). Additionally, the rule that previously disallowed requests from persons who had failed to claim for the allowance before the elapse of the post-divorce years exceeded a 5-year duration was waived at the onset of the '2002 legislation'. From a viewpoint that the 'two-tier system' causes some lone mother households to experience the working 'poverty trap' dilemma, the system has been amended in August 2002 to facilitate working mothers to experience increases in the total income when their working income increases; various levels of payments have become available that are set at various income brackets, the latter of which are tied to the number of dependent child of the claimant. See Table B.2 at the end of this Appendix. In the new system, the 'total amount' is paid to the income level of less than 1.3 million yen (equivalent to the 'taking' of 0.57 million yen – 'taking' is equivalent to the income minus tax exemptions plus 80 percent of the Child Rearing Fund (*Yōiku Hi*)) and 'partial amount' ranges from the income level of less than 3.65 million but over 1.3 million yen (equivalent of the 'taking' that is less than 2.3 million but over 570 thousand yen). The 'total amount' was rated at 41,880 yen while 'partial amount' varied (ranging from 9,880 to 41,870 yen) accordingly with the level of 'taking' (different rate for every 10 yen of the 'taking') in 2004. The payment rate is annually reviewed against the inflation rate and the total payment is adjusted to take account of the number of dependent children; the additional 5 thousand yen is paid for the second child and additional 3 thousand yen is paid for each additional child, counted from the third child.

- Livelihood Assistance (*Seikatsu Hogo*): Generally referred to as the 'public assistance', this is a public assistance of the 'last resort,' stipulated by the 1950 Livelihood Assistance Law (*Seikatsu Hogo Hō*).

This is a means-tested benefit and one is required to use all available resources including assets, ability to work as well as the Civil Code (*Minpō*) defined mutual aids. The Livelihood Assistance is an in-cash benefit (except for medical expenses that are provided in-kind) that is available to households when household incomes fall short of the income level that is set to reflect the minimum standard of living. The calculation of the minimum standard of living considers several categories of expenses: livelihood; housing; educational; medical; maternity; occupational; and funeral. The amount payable also reflects a number of factors including the household size, age of household members and location of the residence. The amount payable is the difference between the household's final income and the minimum cost of living.

- Attainment of Child Rearing Fund (*Yōiku Hi*): The '2002 legislation' stipulated the 'effort duty' (*Doryoku Gimu*) on the part of the non-custodial parent, custodial parent, the state and other regional public entities with regard to securing the 'child rearing fund' for the child of the divorced family. Other progress includes:
 - In March 2004, the central state has produced a leaflet that provides information with respect to the method of making arrangements for the 'child rearing fund' payment, guideline for calculating the sum of the payment and so on. Regional public entities are expected to make use of the leaflet in their consultation work.
 - Previously, the duty of the custodial parent to secure the regular payment from non-custodial parent has been burdensome since the amount enforceable by law has been limited to the over-due part of the payment. In order to simplify the proceeding against the non-custodial parent who does not abide to the legally made

payment arrangement, amendments have been made to such ‘system of legally binding forcible exercise’ (*Minji Shikkō Hō No Kaisei Tō O Naiyō To Suru Tanpo Bukken Oyobi Minji Shikkō Seidō No Kaizen No Tame No Minpō Hō Tō No Ichibu O Kaisei Suru Hōritsu An*) (agreed in the diet in July 2003 (effective since April 2004)). The new system now allows the proceeding to be made against the non-abiding party on the part overdue *as well as* the future sum owed by the non-custodial parent. Another legal initiative to improve the process of securing the arranged payment concerns the method of enforcing the payment (i.e. adding the ‘indirect enforcement’ to the current ‘direct’ method), the bill of which has been submitted to the diet in March 2004.

- Since April 2003, the Livelihood Fund (*Seikatsu Shikin*) of the Mother-Child Welfare Loans can be loaned in a lump sum (upper limit: 1,236 thousand yen) to cover the expenditure on court proceedings that is required to secure the Child Rearing Fund.
- Legal aid services concerning the attainment of the ‘child rearing fund’ have been offered as a part of the *Lone Mother Households etc.* Job Attainment/Self-Reliance Assistance Center Project (*Boshi Katei Tō Shūgyō/ Jiritsu Shien Sentā Jigyō*).

Measures related to the consultation service:

- Mother-Child Self-Reliance Assistant (*Boshi Jiritsu Shien In*): Under the 2002 legislation, the name of the Mother-Child Advisor (*Boshi Sōdan In*) has been amended to the Mother-Child Self-Reliance Assistant. Previously only found in local Welfare Offices at the prefectural level, those at the city, town and village level are encouraged for the active allocation of such personnel. They offer the listening and advisory function involving the wide-ranging welfare

affairs of lone mother households and the equivalents. The job role has been recently extended to cover the assistance role in enhancing one's employability and job-search related activities.

- The Woman Advisor (*Fujin Sōdan In*) plays a similar role although they work under the distinctively different law of the Anti-Prostitution Law (*Baishun Hogo Hō*). The Child/Local Welfare Commissioner (*Jidō/Minsei Iin*), the unpaid volunteer workers carry out the more localised semi-state advisory work. Found in one's neighbourhoods, they offer general advice on welfare-related matters and primarily assist the work of various public entities on issues that mainly concern the welfare of children, pregnant and parturient women and *also* lone mother households.

Measures related to the housing assistance:

- Mother-Child Livelihood Assistance Facility (*Boshi Seikatsu Shien Shisetsu*): This facility predominantly admits both the child and mother as a pair when the authority recognises that the child's welfare would be in danger otherwise. There are 284 facilities of this sort nationwide (as of March 2003). The childcare taker is now added to the facility staff accordingly to the regulation of the daycare center. The facility is encouraged to implement the *Boshi Katei* etc. Child Rearing Assistance Room (*Boshi Katei Tō Kosodate Shien Shitsu*) for which the state subsidy is now available. In addition, the year 2003 found the establishment of four small-scale 'satellite-type' Mother-Child Livelihood Assistance Facilities that specifically cater for lone mother household that is expected to attain independence in a short period of time. The management of these 'satellite-type' facilities closely corresponds with that of the main facilities and focuses on assisting residents to attain early self-reliance via paid work.

- Other housing assistance: Both the regional public entities and Urban Development Corporation that manage various types of public housing are directed to positively discriminate lone mother household applicants in the selection process for their properties. Since October 2003, loans for housing have become available to lone mother households etc. if they satisfy specified criteria that are tied to their job-search activities. Several private enterprises also take on the role of becoming the warrantor to cater for the difficulty that *Boshi Katei* often faces in times of renting the private-sector housing.

Direct means of the employment assistance:

- Under the Mother-Child and Widow Welfare Law (*Boshi Oyobi Kafu Fukushi Hō*), the subjects covered by this law are given the priority permit for establishing business stalls within public facilities and starting the business of the barber and beauty related businesses, and selling tobacco, newspapers, magazines, stationary, foods and other goods.

Other means of the livelihood assistance:

- Everyday Livelihood Assistance Project for the Lone Mother Household etc. (*Boshi Katei Tō Nichijō Seikatsu Shien Jigyō*): Renamed from the Caregiver Dispatch Project (*Kaigo Nin Haken Jigyō*), this project facilitates temporary domestic needs in times of the mother's illness or participation in education/work training by dispatching the Family Livelihood Assistant (*Katei Seikatsu Shien Inn*). The service offers overnight childcare. The cost burden ratio between the central state and regional public entities is 1:1.
- Short-Term Child Rearing Assistance Project (*Kosodate Tanki Shien Jigyō*): This project aims to care for the child or both the child and

mother at child welfare institutions for the following reasons: 1) the parent of the child is temporarily in difficulty to care for the child due to ill-health, childbearing, overtime work and so on; and 2) the requirement of an emergency protection because of the spousal domestic violence. Under the 2003 budget, the Short Stay Project (*Shōto Sutei Jigyō*) expanded the subject coverage to include persons who require assistance to lessen the physical and psychological fatigue caused by child rearing or nursing the terminally ill child. Under the Short-Term Child Rearing Assistance Project, the Twilight Stay Project (*Yakan Yōgo Tō Jigyō*) is also available that facilitates the emergency childcare need of the parent during the night and weekend. The cost burden ratio between the central state and regional public entities is 1:1.

- Livelihood Assistance Project for the Lone Parent Household (*Hitori Oya Katei Seikatsu Shien Jigyō*): In order to stabilise the livelihood foundation of the lone parent household that shoulders the double burden of child rearing and breadwinning and suffers from various livelihood problems such as those related to child rearing and health, following measures are available for regional public entities to implement by option: 1) establishment of workshops and consultation to provide the livelihood guidance; 2) provision of the long-term and personalised healthcare assistance; 3) establishment of the weekend/overnight telephone consultation service; 4) provision of the psychological care for the child of the lone parent household; and 5) arrangement of regular gatherings for lone parents to share common interests.
- Enhancement Project Concerning the Assistance Infrastructure for the Self-Reliance of Lone Mother Households (*Boshi Katei No Jiritsu Ni Mukete Shien Taisei No Seibi Jigyō*): This project especially aims to cater for lone mother households in region that tend to be isolated and

can benefit from consultation and information provision. The project includes the assistance provision for service providers in regions that assist such lone mother households.

Other means of the child rearing assistance:

- Priority admission for daycare centers: The ‘2002 legislation’ defined the duty of the municipal governments to give a special discretion when processing entrance applications for daycare centers that are submitted by lone mother households. In March 2003, the state has delivered the Notice on the Handling of the Selection Process for Daycare Centers Involving Lone Mother Households (*Hoikujo No Nyūsho Tō No Senkō No Sai Ni Okeru Boshi Katei Tō No Toriatsukai Ni Tusuite*) to public entities concerned to appeal for the special consideration over the case of lone mother households.
- Extended Hour Childcare Project: The ‘extended hour childcare project’ involves the facilitation of the ‘extended opening hours’ of over 30 minutes before and after the normal opening and closing times respectively.
- Night-Time Childcare and After-Sickness Infant Care Project (*Nyoyōji Kenkō Shien Ichiji Azukari Jigyō*): The state subsidies have been also available for night-time childcare service providers (see Table B.4, at the end of this Appendix). The After-Sickness Infant Care Project that provides the infant care service for infants recovering from sickness has been budgeted under the New Angel Plan. Under the plan, 500 municipalities (*Shi/Chō/Son*) are to participate in this project by 2004.
- After-School Children’s Club Project (*Hokago Jidō Kenzen Ikusei Jigyō*): Under the New Angel Plan and the Policy Concerning the Assistance Measure for the Harmonization of Work and Child Rearing

(*Shigoto To Kosodate No Ryōritsu Shiensaku No Hōshin Ni Tsuite*), the After-School Children's Club Project plans to secure 15 thousand places nationwide for the operation of such club.

Other recent changes: from the government's reports for the year 2003 & 2004⁴³

In addition to the above, there introduced a legislation of specified duration (effective during August 11th 2003 ~ March 31st 2020) called the Law on the Special Measure Concerning the Employment Assistance for the Mother of Lone Mother Household (*Boshi Katei No Haha No Shūgyō No Shien Ni Kansuru Tokubetsu Sochi Hō*). This legislation has been established to facilitate the welfare of lone mother households mainly on a basis of two factors. To counter for: 1) the aggravated employment difficulty facing the mother of lone mother household in times of the changing economic situation; 2) the introduction of the time restriction imposed on the entitlement to the Child Rearing Allowance (*Jidō Fuyō Teate*) as noted earlier. Under the legislation, the government has a duty to submit yearly reports (report that declares the implementation of specific measures and the review) on the special employment measure to the national diet.

Various employment measures became available under this temporal law although the actual establishment of these measures has been varied across the different administrative areas (see Table B.3, at the end of this Appendix) since it has been by and large relied on the initiative (in both the financial and effort terms) of the individual state entities. Examples of these

⁴³ For detail see: 2003 Review Concerning the Existing Employment Assistance Measure for the Mother of *Boshi Katei* (*Heisei 15 Nendo Ni Okeru Boshi Katei No Haha No Shūgyō No Shien Ni Kansuru Shisaku No Jisshi No Jyōkyō Hōkoku*), Submitted to the 159th National Diet (Ordinary), the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare; and 2004 Proposition on the Employment Assistance Measure for the Mother of *Boshi Katei* (*Heisei 16 Nendo Ni Oite Boshi Katei No Haha No Shūgyō No Shien Ni Kanshite Kōjiyou To Suru Shisaku*), Submitted to the 159th National Diet (Ordinary), the Ministry of Health and Labour and Welfare.

measures are given below:

- Employment/ Self-Reliance Assistance Centre Project for Lone Mother Households etc. (*Boshi Katei Tō Shūgyō/ Jiritsu Shien Sentā Jigyō*): Launched in 2003, it aims to provide a holistic employment related service to the mother of lone mother household. The main body that runs such project is the regional public entities (prefectures, designated cities and equivalents). The cost burden is shared between the state and the regional public entities (0.5:0.5).
- Vocational Self-Reliance Assistance Benefit (*Jiritsu Shien Kyōiku Kunren Kyūfu*): For the mother of lone mother household who attends specified educational training workshops, the refund of approximately 40 percent (the upper limit is set at 200 thousand yen) of the total fee is available since 2003. The cost burden ratio between the central state and regional public entities for this measure is 3:1. So far, the regional public entities have not actively participated in offering this benefit.
- Advanced Skills Training Promotion Fund (*Kōtō Ginō Kunren Sokushin Hi*): For the mother of lone mother household who attends the training course of over 2 years in order to attain a qualification that is advantageous for employment, the monthly payment of 103 thousand yen is available over the last 1/3 of the training course to lessen the burden of livelihood expenses. The sought qualifications must be specialist qualifications such as those to become nurse, care worker, childcare worker, physiotherapist and occupational therapist that will likely to lead the training participant to attain employment at the end of the training course. The cost burden ratio between the central state and regional public entities is 3:1. This fund has been actively executed at the prefectural level but the public authorities at the lower levels of the state have been less involved with the execution of this fund.

- Employment Subsidy to Assist the Specified Job Seeker (Tokutei Kyūshoku Sha Koyō Kaihatsu Josei Kin): Subsidies are available for the employer who provides regular employment for the mother of lone mother household who has the special difficulty in finding employment. In 2003, the total of 5,300 million yen has been spent on 20,267 of such incidences.

- Regular Employment Conversion Incentive Payment (Jyōyō Koyō Tenkan Gekirei Kin): Since 2003, the employer who newly recruits the mother of lone mother household as an irregular worker and switch the worker to become the regular worker after OJT is entitled to receive the payment of 300 thousand yen per worker after 6 months of such conversion. The cost burden ratio between the central state and regional public entities is 3:1. The project execution rate has been less than 50 percent at the prefectural level and marginal in other levels of the public entities.

- Trial Employment Incentive Payment (Toraiaru Koyō Gekirei Kin): The central state supports the Trial Employment System in which the employer of the mother of lone mother household is paid 50,000 yen per month (for the maximum of 3 months) while both the employer and employee can ‘try out’ the work and employee respectively. In 2003, 175 persons entered themselves to employment as such ‘trial’ workers.

- Model Project Specific Promotion Project (Tokutei Jigyō Suishin Moderu Jigyō): Since 2003, the state-led initiative has been launched to foster the development and implementation of future-looking projects that facilitate better employment opportunity for the mother of *Boshi Katei*. The cost burden ratio between the central state and regional public entities for the project is 1:1. In 2003, for instance, Matsuyama City has commissioned the project to Agora (NPO) and carried out an

experimental project of establishing a home-working model based on the Internet network.

- Team for Advancing the Employment of Lone Mothers (*Boshi Katei Koyō Sokushin Chiimu*): A special team has been created within the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare to overlook the effective execution of various new employment initiatives. Recent work involved requesting cooperation to advance the employment of the mother of lone mother household from Nippon Keidanren (*Nihon Keizai Dantai Rengō Kai*) and other economic organisations. The regional labour bureau made similar appeal to employers in regions. In addition, 300 thousand leaflets have been produced to publicise the cooperation required on the part of private sector employers to advance the employment situation faced by the mother of lone mother household.
- Under the equal employment policy initiative, various measures have been implemented to improve the employment situation of women as a whole. For instance, under the Women's Challenge Assistance Initiative (*Josei No Charenji Shien Saku*), 'positive actions' have been encouraged in various sectors of the society to improve the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), endorsed by the United Nations. In 2003, for example, the information system to support this initiative has been considered, which resulted in the establishment of the Challenge Site (see <http://www.gender.go.jp/e-challenge/>).

Various measures are currently in operation to harmonize working and child rearing that include: 1) the state-led publicity campaign for the 'family-friendly' enterprise; 2) the information provision service via the telephone and Internet concerning available care services for workers; and 3) the seminar provision to assist those who wish to return to employment after the break from employment due to the care work for the elderly or child.

- Harmonisation Assistance Hello Work (*Ryōritsu Shien Harō Wāku*):
Previously the Harmonisation Assistance Hello Work that is established in 12 places nationwide assisted the employment of non-employed persons. Since May 2003, the subject of the establishment expanded to include the mother of lone mother household who is in the irregular employment but wish to switch to the regular employment in future.
- Workshops (offering counseling skills and other knowledge related to the employment consultation/assistance) were carried out in March 2004, subjecting licensed service providers that provide employment assistance for the mother of lone mother household and widows at the free of charge.

Table B.1: Showing the Types and Specifics of the Mother-Child Welfare Fund Loans (*Boshi Fukushi Kashitsuke Kin*):

Loan types	Eligible subjects	Loan details/ Interest rates	Upper limits loanable
Enterprise Start-Up Fund	Mother of lone mother household; Mother-Child Welfare Organisation	To cover the fixed cost initially required for the start-up of a business. Interest rate: free	2.83 million yen; 4.26 yen (for the organisation or instances when several number of lone mothers jointly start-up a business)
Enterprise Continuation Fund	Mother of lone mother household; Mother-Child Welfare Organisation	To cover the working capital. Interest rate: free	1.42 yen
Education Fund	Dependent child of lone mother household; child without parents	To cover the school fee and other expenses required to attend: High School; University; Technical College; Higher Vocational School and so on. Interest rate: free	Advanced-level schooling: (<u>upper limits</u>) 45 thousand yen per month (for home schools) 52,500 yen per month (for non-home schools) Specialised-level: (<u>upper limits</u>) 79,500 yen per month (for home schools) 94,500 yen per month (for non-home schools) General-level: (<u>upper limits</u>) 43,500 yen per month Note: If the Child Rearing Allowance becomes terminated due to the child's age, the amount payable is the specified amount above plus the amount of Child Rearing Allowance.
Skills Attainment Fund	Mother of lone mother household	To cover expenses for attaining know-how required to start-up a business or become employed. Interest rate: free	General case: 50 thousand yen per month Special case: Lump sum of 0.6 million yen For driving license: 0.46 million yen
Training Fund	Dependent child of lone mother	To cover expenses for attaining know-how	50 thousand yen per month

	household; child without parents	required to start-up a business or become employed. Interest rate: free	For driving license: 0.46 million yen Note: If the Child Rearing Allowance becomes terminated due to the child's age, the amount payable is the specified amount above plus the amount of Child Rearing Allowance.
Employment Preparation Fund	Mother of lone mother household; child without parents	To cover basic expenses required for employment such as the cost of work-wears and bicycle. Interest rate: free	General case: 0.1 million yen For driving license: 0.32 million yen
Medical/ Nursing Care Fund	Mother and child of lone mother household (loan of the nursing care purpose excludes child)	To cover expenses required for receiving the medical treatment or nursing care (for the duration of less than 1 year). Interest rate: free	Medical: 0.45 million yen Nursing care: 0.5 million yen
Livelihood Fund	Mother of lone mother household	To subsidise everyday expenses in order to stabilise and maintain livelihood during the time: 1) in education/training; 2) in receipt of medical/nursing care; 3) soon after becoming the lone mother household (the elapsed time must be less than 7 years) (thereafter called the 'livelihood stabilising duration'); and 4) of being unemployed. Interest rate: annual rate of 3% but free of charge if: 1) loaned together with the Medical/Nursing Care Loan; 2) the purpose of loaning this fund is for training; and 3) the amount loaned by the	General case: 0.103 million yen per month For education/training purpose: 0.141 million yen per month Note: Monthly 0.103 million yen (upper limit to the total: 2,400,000 yen) is payable to the mother of lone mother household in the 'livelihood stabilising duration'. Also, such mother is entitled for the loan amounting to 1.236 million yen for the purpose of attaining the Child Rearing Fund from the non-custodial parent via court proceedings.

		mother of lone mother household in the 'livelihood stabilising duration' does not exceed the monthly amount of 20,000 yen.	
Housing Fund	Mother of lone mother household	To cover housing-related expenses including those for building, buying, renovating, maintaining and enlarging houses. Interest rate: annual rate of 3%	1.5 million yen
Housing-Move Fund	Mother of lone mother household	To cover expenses required for settling the lease when moving houses. Interest rate: annual rate of 3%	0.26 million yen
Education Preparation Fund	Dependent child of lone mother household; child without parents	To cover basic expenses required for education/training such as clothing. Interest rate: free	39,500 yen (Junior School); 46,100 yen (Middle School); 85 thousand yen (State High School); 100 thousand yen (Training School etc.); 0.3 million yen (Private High School); 0.38 million yen (State University, Junior College etc.); 0.45 million yen (Private University, Junior College etc.)
Marriage Fund	Mother of lone mother household	To cover expenses concerning the marriage of children who are dependents of lone mother households. Interest rate: annual rate of 3%	0.3 million yen
Special Case Child Rearing Fund	Mother of lone mother household	For persons who were in receipt of the Child Rearing Allowance in July 2002 and those whose amount payable became less than that of July 2002 at the time of renewing the	The difference in the allowance payment at the time of renewing the entitlement and that received in July 2002.

		entitlement (exclude those whose allowance have become terminated in totality).	
		Interest rate: free	

Source: This table is adopted from a table titled '*Boshi Fukushi Shikin Kashitsuke Kin No Gaiyō, Heisei 15 Nendo Ni Okeru Boshi Katei No Haha No Shugyō No Shien Ni Kansuru Shisaku No Jisshi No Jyōkyō Hōkoku*', *Heisei 15 Nendo Ni Okeru Boshi Katei No Haha No Shūgyō No Shien Ni Kansuru Shisaku No Jisshi No Jyōkyō Hōkoku*, Kosei Rodosho (2003) [submitted to the 159th National Diet (Ordinary)], pp. 43.

Note: Numbers and details are correct as of year 2003.

Table B.2: Showing Income Brackets for the Child Rearing Allowance Payments, Tied to the Number of Dependants

Number of dependants	Upper limits of the mother's 'taking' / For the 'total amount' payment (million yen)	Upper limits of the mother's 'taking' / For the 'partial amount' payment (million yen)
0	0.19	1.92
1	0.57	2.3
2	0.95	2.68
3	1.33	3.06
4	1.71	3.44
5	2.09	3.82

Source: <http://www.mhlw.jp.topics/2002/06/tp0626-2.html> (accessed on 24/06/2004) [Kosei Rodosho, *Jidō Fuyō Teate No Kaisei Naiyō Ni Tsuite*].

Note: 'Taking' (*Shotoku*) is equivalent to the income minus tax exemptions plus 80 percent of the 'child rearing fund' (*Yōiku Hi*) in the case when the mother receives such fund from the non-custodial parent, the child's father. This is because a new measure has been stipulated that states that if the mother receives money or goods as a means from the child's father to cover the cost of her custodial child, 80 percent of the monetary value of such money and goods are considered as a part of the 'taking.'

Table B.3: Showing the Implementation Progress Concerning the Newly Introduced Employment Related Measures

Project Name	Prefecture (<i>To/Do/Fu/Ken</i>) (% entities pursuing the project out of 47 entities in total)	Designated city (<i>Seirei Toshi</i>) (% entities pursuing the project out of 13 entities in total)	Equivalents to the designated city (<i>Chukaku Shi</i>) (% entities pursuing the project out of 35 entities in total)	Ordinary city, town & villages with welfare office (658)	Total % entities pursuing the project out of 753 entities in total (*out of 95 for the project [1])
[1]	83.0	61.5	31.4	---	61.1
[2]	74.5	7.7	17.1	17.6	21.0
[3]	61.7	7.7	17.1	13.8	16.9
[4]	40.4	7.7	5.7	8.5	10.4

Source: Kōsei Rōdoshō Koyō Kintō/Jidō Katei Kyōiku Katei Fukushima Ka.

Note: Numbers are correct as of January 2004.

Key (Project names):

[1] Employment/ Self-Reliance Assistance Centre Project for Lone Mother Household etc.

[2] Vocational Self-Reliance Assistance Benefit

[3] Advanced Skills Training Promotion Fund

[4] Regular Employment Conversion Incentive Payment

Table B.4: Showing the Implementation Progress Concerning the Newly Introduced Child Rearing Assistance Related Measures

Project type/ Year	2000 (all figures show the 'number of places participated')	2001	2002	2003
[1] Extended Hour Childcare Project	8,052	9,431	10,600	-
[2] Night-Time Childcare	46	49	55	58*
[3] After-School Children's Club**	10,994	11,803	12,782	13,698

Source: Kōsei Rōdoshō Koyō Kintō/Jidō Katei Kyōiku Katei Fukushima Ka.

Note: * Number is correct as of 1st October; ** Numbers are correct as of 1st May of specified years.

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Interview Questions for Lone Mothers:

Reminder - 'The Time Dimensions and Range of Livelihood and Social Relational Aspects'

- Time dimensions: past, present and future
- Livelihood aspects: psychological, financial, physical or health in general, child rearing, employment, and other living conditions
- Social relational aspects: family, parents, relatives, child's father, child's friends' parents, friends, neighbours, internet-based, child's school teachers, workplace-based, welfare state, private or voluntary organisations, and others

Background Questions:

1. Marital experience to date (never-married/ divorced/ widowed/ separated)
2. Current age & age at which she entered lone motherhood
3. Number & age of children
4. Employment history
5. Residence

Main Questions:

1. Can you talk about the process, leading up to your lone motherhood and where do you see yourself going?
2. Prior to entering into lone motherhood, what was your thought on becoming a lone mother? For instance, what was your foremost concern or interest? Did you take any response to your concern or interest? Has your initial thought changed after becoming a lone mother?
3. Did you prepare for pursuing lone motherhood? How do you reflect upon your action/inaction?
4. Prior to becoming a lone mother, for instance when you were preparing

or considering about it, did you feel you might have benefited from a particular support function or service?

5. What has been an important means of support to you whether before or after becoming a lone mother?
6. When you became a lone mother or decided to become a lone mother, what were the reactions of others? How do you reflect upon their reactions?
7. Since becoming a lone mother, what has been your main concern or what has been problematic? What have been your responses to such concern?
8. Any other issues you want to discuss or bring to my research attention?

Interview Questions for Welfare Workers:

Background Questions:

1. Age range
2. Male/Female
3. Job title, affiliation and the organisational structure within which s/he works
4. Related law under which s/he works
5. Professional background and years spent in the current job

Main Questions:

'Exploratory'/General questions:

1. Can you describe the major work contents and daily tasks that you deal with?
2. What laws do you work under?
3. Can you talk about any of your concerns that you have about the public welfare service that you are involved in delivering?
4. From your everyday work, how do you take account of the problems of lone mothers and the ideal role of public welfare in relation to your account?
5. What potential improvements might aid your public welfare work to

serve such ideal role?

'Specific' questions:

6. With your everyday work experiences, how do you take account of the reality of the recent welfare reforms? For instance, can you talk in relation to the recent changes seen in the areas of gender, service-orientation and universalisation of welfare?
7. Are there any other issues that you would like to raise concerning your work?

Appendix D: Profiles of the Sampled Lone Mothers and Welfare Workers

Table D.1: Showing the Sampled Lone Mother Population by Affiliations

Source-type	Number Sampled
<i>From the open sampling:</i>	---
Private/professional network	5
Lone mother affiliates of the 'Hands-in-Hands' and the 'Single Mother's Forum'	41
<i>From the more targeted sampling after the initial coding work:</i>	---
Republic of Boshikatei	1
Quasi-state Mother-Child Groups	5
Widow organizations	0
<i>Total</i>	52

Note: Figures are in 'number of lone mothers interviewed'.

Table D.2: Showing the Characteristics of the Sampled Lone Mother Population

Age	Number Sampled	Marital Status	Number Sampled	Locality of Residence	Number Sampled
20s	5	Separated	7	Tokyo	37
30s	12	Never-married	9	Kanagawa	8
40s	18	Divorced	34	Chiba	4
50s	12	Widowed	2	Saitama	3
60+	5	---	---	Other regions	0

Note: Figures are in 'number of lone mothers interviewed'; 'Widowed' here means the 'spousal-death-separated' lone mothers.

Table D.3: Showing the Sampled Welfare Worker Population by Job Affiliations

Work-Type	Number Sampled
Workers mainly involved in the advisory work and the administration of the Child Rearing Allowance (e.g. Mother-Child Advisor, Women Advisor, the departmental/sectional head of the child welfare department or family welfare)	24
Workers in the local welfare offices involved in the administration of the Livelihood Assistance	4
Onsite facility workers at the Mother-Child Livelihood Assistance Facility (e.g. facility manager, mother-child advisor and care worker)	15
<i>Total</i>	43

Note: Figures are in 'number of persons interviewed'.

Table D.4: Showing the Localities Involved in the Sampled Welfare Worker Population

Locality	Counts Specific for the Sampled Welfare Office	Counts Specific for the Sampled Mother-Child Livelihood Assistance Facility
Tokyo	6	5
Kanagawa	4	2
Chiba	2	4
Saitama	2	2
<i>Total</i>	14	12

Note: Figures are in 'number of places visited in the particular region'.

Appendix E: Summary Profile of the Lone Mother Interviewees

Table E.1: Summary Profile of the Lone Mother Interviewees

Ref. no.	Current age	Age of entry into lone motherhood (the latest one if more than once)	Current marital status
Lm 1	Mid 60s	Late 50s	Divorced (D)
Lm 2	Mid 60s	Late 50s	D
Lm 3	Early 60s	Mid 50s	D
Lm 4	Early 50s	Early 30s (S); mid 40s (D)	D
Lm 5	Early 50s	Late 40s	D
Lm 6	Early 50s	Late 30s	D
Lm 7	Mid 50s	Early 40s	D
Lm 8	Early 50s	Late 30s (S); early 40s (D)	D
Lm 9	Early 50s	Late 30s	D
Lm 10	Mid 50s	Early 40s (S) (D)	D
Lm 11	Early 50s	Late 30s (S); late 40s (D)	D
Lm 12	Late 40s	Mid 30s	D
Lm 13	Mid 40s	Mid 30s	D
Lm 14	Early 40s	Early 30s (S); Late 30s (D)	D
Lm 15	Mid 40s	Mid 30s	D
Lm 16	Early 40s	Late 30s (D)	D
Lm 17	Mid 40s	Mid 30s	D
Lm 18	Late 40s	Mid 40s	D
Lm 19	Mid 40s	Early 40s	D
Lm 20	Early 40s	Mid 30s (S) (D)	D
Lm 21	Early 40s	Mid 30s (S); mid 30s (D)	D
Lm 22	Early 40s	Early 40s	D
Lm 23	Mid 40s	Mid 30s	D
Lm 24	Early 30s	Late 20s (S) (D)	D
Lm 25	Early 30s	Mid 20s (D)	D
Lm 26	Late 30s	Late 20s	D
Lm 27	Late 30s	Mid 30s (S); Late 30s (D)	D
Lm 28	Late 30s	Mid 30s	D
Lm 29	Late 30s	Early 30s	D
Lm 30	Late 30s	Late 20s (S); Early 30s (D)	D
Lm 31	Late 30s	Early 30s	D
Lm 32	Mid 20s	Early 20s	D
Lm 33	Late 20s	Late 20s	D
Lm 34	Late 20s	Mid 20s	D
Lm 35	Early 50s	Late 30s	Never-Married (NM)
Lm 36	Late 40s	Mid 20s	NM
Lm 37	Late 40s	Early 30s	NM
Lm 38	Early 30s	20s	NM
Lm 39	Mid 30s	Early 30s	NM
Lm 40	Mid 30s	Late 20s	NM
Lm 41	Early 30s	Early 30s	NM
Lm 42	Late 20s	Mid 20s	NM
Lm 43	Late 20s	Mid 20s	NM
Lm 44	Early 50s	Mid 40s (about to divorce)	Separated (S)
Lm 45	Early 50s	Early 40s	S
Lm 46	Mid 50s	Mid 30s	S
Lm 47	Early 40s	Late 20s	S
Lm 48	Late 40s	Late 40s	S
Lm 49	Late 40s	Late 40s	S
Lm 50	Early 40s	Late 30s (about to divorce)	S
Lm 51	Mid 60s	Mid 30s	Death-Separated Widowed (W)
Lm 52	Early 50s	Mid 30s	W

Appendix F: Details Concerning the ‘Relevant’ Welfare Workers for the Research

The present Appendix offers some details on positions of the welfare workers who have been identified as ‘relevant’ for the current research (see chapter 3).

Mother-Child Self-Reliance Assistant (*Boshi Jiritsu Shien In*)

It was under the 1952 Mother-Child Welfare Fund Loan Related Law (*Boshi Fukushi Shikin No Kashitsuke Tō Ni Kansuru Hōristu*) that the post-war Mother-Child Advisor (*Boshi Sōdan In*), was found. Renamed to the current name of the Mother-Child Self-Reliance Assistant (*Boshi Jiritsu Shien In*) in 2002, they form the key gatekeepers of the public welfare for lone mothers on an account that they are normally the first line of the public welfare personnel that the welfare seeking lone mother will likely to encounter at the local welfare office. They have a broad responsibility of listening to and advising the lone mother client both in person and over the phone on a wide-ranging welfare and general livelihood issues, including the welfare services available under the Mother-Child and Widow Welfare Law (*Boshi Oyobi Kafu Fukushi Hō*). Notably, under the recent 2002 amendments to this law, their role of providing the employment-related assistance has become emphasised.

Despite the significance of the welfare function played by them and the specialism required for effectively conducting their welfare role, most of them are employed as irregular-workers (though hours worked are similar to that of the regular employees). Formally, no special qualifications are required for becoming employed in this job post. Indeed, the formal requirement involves a rather ambiguous definition that they are appointed by the state ‘from civilians who are socially trusted, have passion,

able-minded and the necessary characteristics to fulfill the duty'.⁴⁴ In fact, it was only after 1965 that the state began offering the regular employee status for the people with experience and social welfare related qualifications. There are 1,300 Mother-Child Self-Reliance Assistant in total of which 436 and 864 are the regular and irregular employees respectively.⁴⁵

Woman Advisor (*Fujin Sōdan In*)

Though offering a similar role as that of the Mother-Child Self-Reliance Assistant in practice, the Woman Advisor operates under a distinctively different legislation of the 1956 Anti-Prostitution Law (*Baishun Hogo Hō*). Under this law, their formal role is defined as to be dealing with: 1) women who have engaged in prostitution and are recognised as in the need of protection and support; 2) women who do not have previous background in prostitution but are considered to be at risk in involving themselves in prostitution; and 3) women who have problems in maintaining the ordinary civil life due to reasons such as the breakdown of familial relationships and when there are no other institutions that can solve their problems.

Since 1962, they have also become formally assigned to the work of offering the temporal or emergency relief for both the mother and child who suffer from the spousal violence. By 1999, familial/marriage related troubles accounted for almost half the reason for the mobilisation of their service, reflecting the gap in their actual work and the nature of the law under which they work. Since April 2002, the bureau within which they work has become an officially recognised entity to provide the spousal violence counselling and support centre functions. As of April 2001, there are 669 Woman Advisors positioned in local welfare offices and also in the Woman Advisor Bureaus (47 facilities nationwide).

⁴⁴ *Boshi Kafu Fukushi Hando Bukku: Heisei 9 Nendo Boshi/Kafu Fukushi Shikin Kashitsuke Techō*, Koseisho Jido Katei Kyoku Katei Fukushika (1997), pp.90.

⁴⁵ *Heisei 15 Nendo Ni Okeru Boshi Katei No Haha No Shūgyo No Shien Ni Kansuru Shisaku No Jisshi No Jyōkyo Hōkoku*, Kosei Rodosho (2003) [submitted to the 159th National Diet (Ordinary)].

Street level Welfare Workers involved in the administration of the Child Rearing Allowance (*Jidō Fuyō Teate*)

These welfare workers are the public servants who work in the public welfare related departments (e.g. child/family welfare department) of the local welfare office (*Fukushi Jimu Sho*). The Child Rearing Allowance is the major means-tested cash benefit available for the non-bereaved lone mother households, established under the 1961 Child Rearing Allowance Law (*Jidō Fuyō Teate Hō*) (see also Chapter 4). The subject of this allowance is the mother or guardian having the custody of a child under the age of 18 years who does not share a common household income with the child's father and whose income is below the state defined threshold. Notably, the mother who is recognised to be engaged in the *de facto* marriage (*Jijitsu Kon*) is not entitled to this allowance. Further, an applicant for this benefit has to file an application at local welfare offices to be considered for the allowance and submit the Notice of Current Situation (*Genkyō Todoke*) every year for seeing the continuation of the payment. The entitlement criteria and the application process for this allowance has been controversial, especially the discriminating treatments vis-à-vis the differing routes into lone motherhood. In January 2004, 890,779 persons are in receipt of this benefit (562,878 receiving the 'total amount'; 327,901 the 'partial amount').⁴⁶

Street level Welfare Workers Involved in the Administration of the Livelihood Assistance (*Seikatsu Hogo*):

These welfare workers are the public servants who work in the public welfare related departments of the local welfare office (*Fukushi Jimu Sho*). They deal with the so-called 'case works' and delivery of what is generally

⁴⁶ *Heisei 15 Nendo Ni Okeru Boshi Katei No Haha No Shūgyō No Shien Ni Kansuru Shisaku No Jisshi No Jyōkyō Hōkoku*, Kosei Rodosho (2003) [submitted to the 159th National Diet (Ordinary)].

referred to as the ‘public assistance’, established by the 1950 Livelihood Assistance Law (*Seikatsu Hogo Hō*). The Livelihood Assistance is a means-tested benefit, which only becomes available when one is considered to have used *all* the available resources including all assets, ability to work and the Civil Code (*Minpō*) defined mutual aids; that is, it is formally made to be and socially known to be the ‘last resort’ means of assistance. In 2000, 752 thousand households or 1073 thousand persons (i.e. mere 0.84 percent of the total population) received the Livelihood Assistance. In all, *Boshi Katei* accounted for 8.4 percent of all recipient households and the elderly household the high of 45.5 percent.⁴⁷ Though statistically marginal, it is an important safety net for the poverty-ridden layer of people in Japan for it being the ‘last resort’ social safety net. There are a number of scandalised tragedies involving both the elderly and lone mothers that instituted in the delivery (or the lack of it) of this benefit.⁴⁸

Onsite Welfare Workers at the Mother-Child Livelihood Assistance Facility (*Boshi Seikatsu Shien Shisetsu*):

Formerly known as the Mother-Child Home (*Boshi Ryō*), it has undergone a number of historical changes in its management. As early as in Taisho Period, these homes facilitated the welfare of *Boshi Katei* though they were charitable establishments. The first legislative enforcement came in 1937 with the stipulation of the Mother-Child Protection Law (*Boshi Hogo Hō*) and the Military Assistance Law (*Gunjin Fujo Hō*); thus at the time, two types of homes operated under the distinctively different legislations. In the post-war period, these legislations became absorbed into the now-defunct Livelihood Assistance Law (*Kyū Seikatsu Hogo Hō*), which temporarily became the responsible legislation for the Mother-Child Home. Under the

⁴⁷ <http://www.ipss.go.jp/index-e.html> (accessed on 24/06/2004) [National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, *Social Security in Japan 2002-2003*].

⁴⁸ See Terakubo, M. (1988) '*Fukushi*' *Ga Hito O Korosu Toki* (Tokyo: Akebi Shobo), Mizushima, H. (1994) *Kāsan Ga Shiinda: Shiawase Gensō No Jidai Ni* (Tokyo: Shakai Shiso Sha), Seki, C. (1988) *Kono Kuni Wa Osoroshii: Mōhitotsu No Rōgo* (Tokyo: Ningen Sensho 130).

1947 Child Welfare Law (*Jidō Fukushi Hō*), the facility finally found the stable status as the child's welfare facility. The name of the facility was amended to the current Mother-Child Livelihood Assistance Facility under amendments to the law in 1998.

There are 284 such facilities nationwide as of March 2003, which is statistically marginal; the housing stock offered by this facility can cater less than 1 percent of all lone mother households. However, the welfare significance of this facility has been emphasised in terms of its emergency shelter function and the housing relief especially in the area of Tokyo that is relatively well endowed in terms of the potential employment but costly to live.⁴⁹ These are thus considered to be the crucial means of relief for the over-proportional (in relation to the shelter capacity currently available) number of lone mother households that suffer from the domestic violence problem and also financial constraints. The facility is also significant in terms of the way it allows the usage by both the mother and child (i.e. the family unit), which is surprisingly (especially in light of the state-endorsed 'one-body' theory) a rare practice conducted by the public social welfare facilities in Japan.⁵⁰

On the basis of the formal definition, the facility offers a 'temporal' means of accommodation for females without spouses or equivalents whose dependent children who are recognised to lack appropriate welfare, and provides the necessary livelihood related supports with the aim of assisting residents to attain self-reliance. However, these facilities are tended to be used as the long-term housing for those residents whose prospect of attaining independent living are rather limited whether for psycho-physical disabilities or other reasons. Commonly, the physical standard of these

⁴⁹ Yui, Y. and Yano, K. (2000) Housing Problems for Single-parent Families and the Welfare Facilities: A Case Study of Tokyo. *Geographical Sciences (Chiri-Kagaku)*, 55 (2): pp. 77-98.

⁵⁰ Yuzawa, N. (1997) "Boshi Ryo To Josei Mondai" in K. Sugimoto (ed.) *MINERVA Fukushi Raiburari 16 Shakaifukushi No Naka No Jendā – Fukushi No Genba No Feminisuto Jissen O Motomete* (Mineruva Shobo).

facilities are dated and often severely limited, which makes the long-term stay in these facilities inappropriate and indeed a matter of social concern.

In 1999, the government notice was issued concerning the procedure against women in need of the protection from spousal violence for encouraging the facility to accept women in need of the emergency temporal protection even though they might be without the dependent child or from the areas other than the relevant administrative area within which the facility operates. In 2002, 2,341 households were newly admitted to the facility of which 42.7 percent came due for the spousal violence, 20.8 percent the financial reason, 19.1 percent the housing problem, 11.1 percent the domestic environmental issues, 3.3 percent the psychological or physical condition of the mother, 0.5 percent the employment related reason, and 2.5 percent other reasons.⁵¹ In this field of public welfare, the onsite management of the facility is progressively privatised for the better efficiency in management and increased specialisation of the available services. See Table F.1 for the decline in the number of the publicly managed facilities in Tokyo.

Table F.1: Showing the Establishment/Management Situation of the Mother-Child Livelihood Assistance Facilities (*Boshi Seikatsu Jiritsu Shien Shisetsu*) in Tokyo

Year	Publicly Established & Publicly Managed	Publicly Established & Privately Managed	Privately Established & Privately Managed	Total
1989	14	7	19	40
1999	4	17	17	38

Source: *Heisei 8 Nendo Zenkoku Boshi Ryō Jittai Chōsa Hōkokusho*, Shakaifukushi Hōjin, Zenkoku Shakaifukushi Kyōgika and Zenkoku Boshiryō Kyōgikai (1998).

⁵¹ *Heisei 14 Nendo Boshi Seikatsu Shien Shisetsu Nyūtaisho Jyōkyō Chōsa*, Kosei Rodosho Koyo Kinto/Jido Katei Kyoku Katei Fukushi Ka (2003).

Appendix G: Socio-geographical Profiles of the Sampled Regions

Table G.1: League Table – Prefectural Comparison

Geographical location	Tokyo	Kanagawa	Chiba	Saitama	Japan, and highest & lowest figures
Total number of inhabitants (2005; in 10m)	1,258 (1)	879 (3)	606 (6)	705 (5)	12,777 Highest: 1,258 (Tokyo) Lowest: 61 (Shimane)
Divorce rate (2004; per 1,000)	2.19 (11)	2.19 (10)	2.16 (13)	2.11 (18)	2.12 Highest: 2.7 (Okinawa) Lowest: 1.57 (Niigata)
Proportion of people older than 65 years of age (2005; in relation to total population)	18.3 (41)	16.8 (45)	17.5 (43)	16.4 (46)	20.1 Highest: 27.1 (Shimaneken) Lowest: 16.1 (Okinawa)
Income of the head of household (2005; in thousand yen)	450.9 (14)	522.3 (1)	392.7 (37)	520.7 (2)	425.5 Highest: 522.3 (Kanagawa) Lowest: 280.6 (Okinawa)
Proportion of people in receipt of the Livelihood Assistance (Seikatsu Hogo) (2004; per 1000)	14.87 (7)	11.06 (15)	7.14 (28)	6.89 (29)	11.15 Highest: 23.16 (Osaka) Lowest: 2.17 (Toyama)
Unemployment rate (2000; Total number of unemployed/ total working population)	4.8 (16)	4.8 (17)	4.7 (21)	4.7 (20)	4.7 Highest: 9.4 (Okinawa) Lowest: 3.0 (Shimane)

Note: Numbers in brackets indicate rankings.

Source: *Tōkei De Miru Todōjifuken No Sugata 2007*, Statistics Bureau.

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